secured Cyclops Drome, having met no opposition during its advance. About 1000, Companies F and G of the 2d Battalion landed against scattered rifle fire at the jetty below Ifaar, a mile overwater from Nefaar. The rest of the battalion came ashore in the same area in the early afternoon. Advance elements of the 2d Battalion were on Sentani Drome at 1130, and by 1215, the battalion commander was able to report that the airfield and its environs had been secured.

During the remainder of the afternoon, patrol action around both airfields accounted for a few Japanese stragglers. Opposition throughout the day had been conspicious by its absence -- the Japanese had disappeared. The 3d Battalion moved up to the airstrips before dark, and at nightfall the entire 186th Infantry set up a defensive perimeter around Cyclops and Sentani Dromes. Patrols of the 1st Battalion were sent west beyond the fields and, at 1645, contacted patrols of the 21st Infantry between Weversdorp and Hollandia Drome.

This contact completed the pincers movement instituted by the 24th and 41st Divisions on 22 April and all important objectives of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE had been secured.

Mopping Up Operations

Although the contact between the 24th and 41st Divisions ended the major tactical phase of the Hollandia Operation, it was necessary to clear the area of scattered enemy troops, attempt to find large organizations of Japanese forces, and cut the enemy's escape

routes.[15] With these objectives in view, Company K, 186th

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15 This section is based principally upon: RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 14; 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 11 - 16; 186th Inf Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 8 - 12; 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 85 - 92, 98 - 110; Ch. VII, pp. 23 - 24, of draft MS 2d Engr Special Brig history.

Infantry, reconnoitered the north shores of Lake Sentani and Poegi and Ase Islands in the lake during 27 April. These and later patrols, most of which were carried out by troops aboard 2d Engineer Special Brigade LVT's or amphibious 6x6 trucks (DUKW's), encountered no Japanese in the area they patrolled.

Other elements of the 3d Battalion, 186th Infantry, flushed about 400 Japanese on Hill 1000, approximately 4,000 yards northeast of Cyclops Drome. On the 27th, artillery fire was placed on these positions, and on the next day Companies B and C, 186th Infantry, made a vain effort to secure the hill against strong rifle and machine gun fire. On the 29th, after a preliminary bombardment by the 205th Field Artillery, the entire 1st Battalion, 186th Infantry, attacked the hill, captured it, and dispersed the remaining enemy. Thereafter the 186th Infantry patrolled into the Cyclops Mountains north and northeast of the airdromes. The 162d Infantry's principal action after clearing the environs of Hollandia was to seize Cape Soeadja, at the northwest limits of Humboldt Bay. This unopposed operation was completed by the 1st Battalion on 27 April.

The regiment continued patrolling in the Hollandia area until 6 May, when it was relieved by the 34th Infantry.

The latter unit, which landed at Humboldt Bay on 24 April, was greatly dispersed. Some elements patrolled around Pim and over the road inland to support the drive of the 186th Infantry, while the 2d Battalion moved to the Hollekang - Cape Djar area east of Humboldt Bay. Company F was sent overland to Tami Airdrome, six miles east of Hollekang, where it was relieved by 162d Infantry troops on 28 April. But the latter group, only a company strong, proved insufficient to protect engineers, who were repairing the Tami strip, against Japanese raiding parties. Therefore, on 2 May, the entire 2d Battalion, 34th Infantry, was moved to Tami. The battalion later established an outpost at Goya, about five miles inland south of Hollekang, in order to halt Japanese movements in that area. The 1st and 3d Battalions, in addition to relieving the 162d Infantry in the Hollandia area, furnished guards for supply dumps, working parties at the beaches, truck drivers, and construction personnel for a number of minor projects.

The 21st Infantry sent a reinforced company to Marneda, about five miles southwest of Lake Sentani, to establish a patrol base. From Marneda, patrols were sent to neighboring villages over inland trails to cut the escape routes of Japanese who were attempting to move west. Another company held a base at Iris Bay, northwest of Tanahmerah Bay, for a short time. The 19th Infantry sent a small force overland from Red Beach 2 to Doromena, on the coast north of

the Cyclops Mountains, whence a trail ran inland to Dazai on the Deprare - Lake Sentani road. General Irving thought that the Japanese might try to use the Doromena - Dazai trail to outflank forces on the main road and he kept an outpost at Doromena until 5 June. By that date 101 Japanese had been killed and 60 had been captured in the area.

The 19th Infantry established another outpost at Wari, lying on the coast eight miles east of Doromena at the terminus of a trail which ran north through the Cyclops Mountains from the airfields. Company G, 19th Infantry, remained at Wari from the 2d to the 23d of May, killing 31 and capturing 126 Japanese during that period. Companies I and K (reinforced) were transported by 542d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment boats to Demta Bay, west of Tanahmerah Bay, and maintained an outpost there for some days. Other elements of the 24th Division probed overland from the western end of Lake Sentani to Genjem, a main inland trail junction through which passed most of the Japanese attempting to escape westward from the Hollandia area.

The 24th Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop had taken up positions on 23 April on the west flank of Red Beach 1. On the 27th, the troop moved to Jangkena, whence it patrolled until 1 May south of the Deprare - Lake Sentani road to Jakonde, a village located at the western end of the lake. On 15 May the troop, reinforced by Company B, 21st Infantry, moved to Simboro on the southern shore of the lake. These two units, aided by fire from the 52d Field Artillery which was emplaced near the airfields, cut many enemy evacuation routes. They left the Simboro area on 27 May. By 6 June the mopping up activities

had succeeded in clearing all but a few Japanese stragglers from the immediate area of the airfields, Hollandia, Tanahmerah Bay, and Tami.[16]

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16 Details concerning mopping up in the area west of Lake Sentani after 6 June are to be found in Ch. IV, below.

Logistic Problems of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE

The evening of 26 April found the RECKLESS TASK FORCE in an excellent position tactically. The principal force objective -- the inland airfields -- had been seized within four days despite a drastic change in the original scheme of maneuver. Japanese opposition had been negligible and in much less strength than expected; there was no evidence that any large scale enemy counterattack could or would be made against the Hollandia area; and land-based air support for the RECKLESS TASK FORCE was being made available from fields captured at Aitape, 125 miles to the east. On the other hand, the restricted beaches at Tanahmerah Bay and the poor condition of the Deprare - Lake Sentani road gave no promise that supplies for the 24th Division would be adequate for some time to come. Congestion on the beaches at Humboldt Bay, the rapid deterioration of the Pim - Lake Sentani road, and a disastrous fire on White Beach 1 during the night of 23 - 24 April made supply of the 41st Division difficult. In brief, the logistic problems of the entire RECKLESS TASK FORCE had assumed amazing proportions.

The Fire

The units moving ashore at Humboldt Bay on 22 April discovered that White Beaches 1 and 2 were cluttered by a large Japanese supply dump. Air bombing and naval support fire prior to the landings had scattered enemy supplies all over the northern sandspit, while smoke and flames issued from much of the materiel as a result of the bombardment. A complicated dispersal problem for the supplies of the 41st Division and its attached units was thereby created.[17]

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17 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 18 - 19; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, p. 28.

The 116th Engineer Battalion, ashore shortly after H Hour, immediately set to work clearing White Beach 1. In accordance with RECKLESS TASK FORCE plans, the battalion endeavored to construct an exit road from the beach to the Pim - Hollandia track, but the terrain north of the beach proved more rugged than anticipated and the swamp northwest of the beach more formidable than expected. Rapid road building was impossible and the project was temporarily abandoned while all efforts were turned to unloading D-Day shipping. On D plus 1 more troops, vehicles, and supplies began pouring on to White Beaches 1 and 2. Only slow progress could be made on exit roads and beach congestion increased. The situation was not helped by the necessity for basing both antiaircraft and field artillery units along the northern sandspit. Some relief was effected during the day as boats of the 532d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment began ferrying a few

supplies directly from the transports to Pim and transferring more there from the two principal unloading beaches.[18]

18 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 18 - 19, 55.

Shortly after dark on the night of 23 - 24 April, a lone Japanese aircraft, apparently guided by still smoldering fires in old Japanese dumps, dropped a stick of bombs on White Beach 1. One of these bombs, landing at the edge of a Japanese ammunition dump below Pancake Hill, started a series of conflagrations which soon spread to a nearby American gasoline dump and thence to other RECKLESS TASK FORCE equipment. Efforts to stop the fires during the night proved fruitless. Intense heat and continuous explositons drove back troops who tried to put out the flames or salvage materiel. The fires raged all night and through most of the next day.[19]

19 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 10, 19; 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 6 - 7; CTG 77.2 Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, p. 4.

Much confusion resulted from the fires. Shortly before midnight, it was rumored at 41st Division headquarters that a Japanese force of unknown strength had landed on White Beach 1 or 2 and possibly on White Beach 4. This erroneous report was relayed to forward units.[20]

20 Msg, 41st Div to 186th Inf, 2100, 23 Apr 44, in 186th Inf S - 1 Jnl, Hollandia.

But even after this rumor had been proven false, both the 162d and

186th Infantry Regiments were ordered to cease all forward movement, go on half rations, and make every attempt to conserve ammunition.[21]

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21 Msgs, 41st Div to 186th Inf, 0400 and 0545, 24 Apr 44, in 186th Inf S - 1 Jnl, Hollandia.

As daylight came, the situation at the beaches became somewhat clarified. The 186th Infantry was then instructed to continue its advance inland, but was again ordered to issue only half-rations and to continue all efforts to conserve ammunition and other supplies. The 162d Infantry was allowed to execute its plans to seize the town of Hollandia, but after that was to limit its operations to patrolling and defensive measures until further notice.[22]

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22 41st Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 7.

The fire had a far worse effect on the logistical situation than on the tactical. Well over 60 percent of the rations and ammunition landed through D plus 1 were burned or blown up during the following two days. The equivalent of eleven LST loads of supplies was lost, while twenty-four men were killed and about one hundred wounded or injured as a result of the fires and explosions.[23]

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23 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 11, 19; rad, CTG 77.2 to CTF 77, 232045/Z Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 23 - 24 Apr 44.

The RECKLESS TASK FORCE immediately radioed to ALAMO FORCE a request for duplication of all bulk stores which had been unloaded

from LST's at Humboldt Bay on D Day and D plus 1. It was further requested that these loadings be sent forward with the first reinforcement convoy, which was scheduled to arrive on D plus 8.[24] When

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24 Rad, RTF to ALAMO, 5619, 24 Apr 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 25 - 26 Apr 44; HTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 19.

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these instructions reached the RECKLESS TASK FORCE's G - 4 liaison groups at the staging areas in eastern New Guinea, ships of the D plus 8 convoy were already being loaded not only with supplies but also with service troops. In order that enough supplies might be sent forward to replace the eleven LST loads which had been lost, the shipping space previously assigned to troop units was now filled with supplies. A good deal of confusion was caused in the rear bases by the speed at which decisions were made, lack of traffic control at the loading area, absence of ammunition data except for dead weight tonnage, and incomplete understanding of time and space requirements by those responsible for the new loading plans.[25]

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25 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 37, 65 - 66.

Some of the paper work for shipping plans, especially for resupply echelons, had apparently not been completed, and the Supply Section of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE later reported that: "...the Task Force was extremely handicapped by the lack of stowage plans and manifests on shipping in the harbor and awaiting call forward. This resulted in the loss of valuable time in unloading urgently needed

cargo and the calling forward of most ships was like reaching in a grab bag."[26] As a result of inadequate information and the confusion

26 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 40.

in the staging areas, it was not possible for the task force Supply Section accurately to ascertain what types and quantities of ammunition arrived with the hurriedly reloaded D plus 8 replacement ships. However, it can be assumed that all ammunition losses were adequately replaced at least after D plus 12, by which time the end of Japanese resistance in the Hollandia area had eliminated the ammunition problem.[27] Even though the ammunition resupply problem

27 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 37, 65 - 66.

had been solved without undue difficulty, it was the opinion of the Supply Section that the RECKLESS TASK FORCE had been extremely fortunate: "...Had the enemy attack from the air been in force, the loss of life and property would have probably delayed the operation for a considerable period of time."[28]

28 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 36.

But the general congestion at Humboldt Bay was not improved for some time. On D plus 2, with fires still raging on the northern spit, RECKLESS TASK FORCE headquarters, the task force reserve, and miscellaneous service units, together with their supplies and equipment, arrived from Tanahmerah Bay. In addition, five LST's of the D plus

2 convoy from eastern New Guinea bases hove into view. There were now eleven LST's awaiting unloading in Humboldt Bay, and the best beaches, White 1 and White 2, could not be used.

The beaches at Hollandia and around the shores of Challenger Cove in front of that town were obstructed by coral reefs and extensive demolitions would be necessary before LST's could use that area. White Beach 3 and the area to its south along the Cape Tjeweri sandspit were available, but ill-suited for the purpose of beaching LST's. However, despite objections from Rear Adm. William M. Fechteler's Central Attack Group, in charge of naval operations at Humboldt Bay, it was finally decided to use the southern sandspit until White Beaches 1 and 2 were again safe. Supplies and equipment unloaded at White Beach 3 were to be transferred by small craft to Pim, at the head of the road inland to Lake Sentani.

Very limited supply dispersal areas were available at Pim, and a bottleneck soon formed there. Moreover, the road inland, barely passable for wheeled vehicles on D Day, was rapidly ruined by continuous heavy trucking and rainstorms. Finally, demands for the use of lightering craft between White Beach 2 and Pim far exceeded the available supply, and some complications arose from lack of cooperation between naval forces and engineer special brigade units regarding the employment of the small boats. Luckily, ample manual labor was available, especially after the arrival of the 34th Infantry and various service units from Tanahmerah Bay. The LST's were unloaded at White Beach 3, while work around the clock kept the unloading areas

at Pim clear enough for steady use of the limited beach and small jetty there. White Beaches 1 and 2 were usable again on D plus 8.[29]

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29 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 19 - 20; CTF 77 Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, pp. 28 - 29; CTF 77.2 Opns Rpt Humboldt Bay, p. 4.

By the morning of 25 April all fires on the northern spit had been brought under control and an inventory of supplies could be taken. With the supplies and ammunition landed from the D plus 2 convoy and those transferred from Tanahmerah Bay, the situation appeared brighter. During the afternoon General Eichelberger, the task force commander, was able to report to ALAMO FORCE that three and one-half units of fire for all weapons were on hand and that enough rations were available to feed all troops for six days.[30]

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30 Rad, RTF to ALAMO, (no number, but with time-date group 252050), 25 Apr 44; rad, RTF to ALAMO (no number, time-date group 250304), 25 Apr 44, both in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 25 - 26 Apr 44.

Supplying Forces Inland

The problem of supplying the troops on the Lake Sentani plain did not end with the seizure of the airfields on 26 April. For some time thereafter the 24th Division continued to receive some of its supplies by laborious hand-carry from Tanahmerah Bay, but this relatively inefficient method did not get adequate food forward. The division's inland troops were on half-rations much of the time. Despite

continuous work by engineers, the 41st Division's main supply line -- the Pim - Lake Sentani Road -- could not stand the demands made upon it and from time to time sections of the road had to be closed so that heavy equipment could make repairs on it.

Early half-successful air drops had added little to the supplies of the troops inland, but air supply was the only feasible method of supporting the inland forces. Cyclops Drome was ready for limited employment on 27 April, and Hollandia Drome could be usedby 1 May. However, the mere availability of these fields did not solve the supply problem. First, weather prevented regular air supply runs for a while and second, it was initially somewhat difficult to assemble the needed supplies at rear bases, from which supplies were already on their way forward to Hollandia by water or were being loaded aboard ship for water transportation. Neither time nor aircraft were available to carry out a program of unloading the ships, reloading their cargoes on aircraft, and flying the supplies to the Hollandia fields. This difficulty was overcome in part by the seizure of Tami Drome, on the coast six miles east of Humboldt Bay.

Tami Drome, first reconnoitered by the RECKLESS TASK FORCE on 24 April and finally secured by the 2d Battalion, 34th Infantry, on 2 May, was ready for use by transport aircraft on 3 May. From ship unloading points at Humboldt Bay, small craft lightered supplies to the mouth of the Tami River, whence trucks hauled the materiel to Tami Drome. From that field, C - 47 aircraft shuttled supplies to Cyclops and Hollandia Dromes, probably executing one of the shortest

field-to-field air supply missions on record.[31]

31 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 14, 19 - 20; ALAMO FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, pp. 48 - 51; 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 88 - 89, 153 - 154.

But these efforts at local air supply proved inadequate and with no marked improvement of road conditions the supply situation for troops inland deteriorated rapidly. The 186th Infantry, for instance, subsisted for three or four days principally on rice and canned fish from captured Japanese ration dumps.[32] The 24th Division was in like

32 This information on the 186th Infantry was supplie to the author by Col. Oliver P. Newman, ex-commanding officer of the 186th Infantry, who read and made notes on this and other draft chapters of the volume during March 1950. These notes are hereinafter cited as: Newman Notes. A copy is on file in the OCMH.

straights. Finally, all local measures became insufficient to meet the needs of the inland infantry units, to say nothing of the thousands of engineer troops who began pouring into the airfield area on 27 April. Consequently, on 4 May, the RECKLESS TASK FORCE requested that 20,000 rations be flown daily to the Hollandia airfields from eastern New Guinea Services of Supply bases. This particular phase of the air transport was begun immediately and ceased about 15 May, by which time local overland transportation had greatly improved.

Many expedients were employed to get the roads into shape both for supply movements and to send inland the heavy engineering equipment which was needed to repair the three airfields. To avoid some of the worst stretches of the Pim - Lake Sentani road, especially those along the north shore of the lake, overwater movements were executed. Small boats and amphibian vehicles were laboriously hauled to Koejaboe from Humboldt Bay, and from Koejaboe supplies and equipment were transported across the lake to Nefaar. Meanwhile, engineers kept up steady work on the road inland from Pim. Landslides, mud, and lack of heavy equipment hindered rapid reconstruction of the Deprare - Lake Sentani Road, over which few attempts were made to move supplies after 26 April.[33]

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33 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 19 - 20. It is the author's remembrance that the good road that was finally built from the airfields to Tanahmerah Bay was completed in July 1944. The road, an impressive engineering feat, led to Seventh Fleet fuel installations at Tanahmerah Bay, where PT boats were based.

In order to organize and control all supply activities, the RECKLESS TASK FORCE set up supply "Sub-Sectors" at Tami Drome, Cape Pie, Cape Tjeweri, and Pim. The officers in charge of each Sub-Sector were made responsible for clearing the beaches, making the most efficient use of available lighterage, speeding the flow of supplies inland, and controlling local troop movements. This decentralization of responsibility from the task force Supply Section

relieved that section of burdensome detail work and operating functions, permitting it to revert to the normal role of planning, overseeing, and co-ordinating. As time passed, roads were repaired or new ones constructed, air supply became automatic, shipping difficulties were straightened out, and the supply situation gradually improved.[34]

34 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 20, 39.

Although the terrain and the unlucky bomb hit on White Beach 1 did much to complicate the supply problems of the RECKLESS TASK FORCE, other explanations are to be found in the task force Supply Section's reports: "Operation 'G' [Hollandia] was a logistical nightmare due primarily to the fact that too much was thrown too soon into too small an area. Under the circumstances, it is felt that the Operation progressed far more smoothly than should be reasonably expected."[35] And

35 RTF Opns Rpt Hollandia, p. 41.

again: "Operation G almost completely 'bogged down' due to the fact that in both objective areas [Tanahmerah and Humboldt Bays] many more vehicles, pieces of heavy equipment, and supplies were landed on the first three days than could be cleared from the beaches."[36] What might

36 Ibid., p. 36.

have happened at Hollandia had the Japanese been prepared can only be surmised.

The End of the Campaign

The RECKLESS TASK FORCE retained control over supply and construction in the Hollandia area until 6 June. During this period, the task force, under the direction of ALAMO FORCE, initiated that construction which ultimately resulted in the development of Hollandia into a major base from which many future operations were supported. The RECKLESS TASK FORCE paid particular attention to airdromes, roads, docks, headquarters buildings, and dispersal areas. On 6 June the Services of Supply assumed responsibility for the continuation of this development.[37] The Services of Supply established at Hollandia Base G, under which construction at Hollandia was speeded. Major headquarters ultimately set up at Hollandia included General Headquarters, United States Army Forces in the Far East, Allied Air Forces, Allied Land Forces, the U.S. Seventh Fleet, the Fifth Air Force, ALAMO FORCE, Sixth Army, and the U.S. Eighth Army.

37 ALAMO FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, p. 54.

After 6 June patrolling in the area continued, much of it by the 24th Division, which was ultimately succeeded by other units. By the 6th, American casualties were 124 men killed, 1,057 wounded, and 28 missing. During the same period, 611 Japanese were captured and over 3,300 killed. Most of the Japanese losses occurred after 26 April (the day the airfields were captured), during the mopping up period, and the bulk of the enemy were killed in small groups. The

pace of the mopping up operations is illustrated by the fact that 800 Japanese were killed during the week ending 6 June.

In exchange for each American killed or wounded to 6 June, the enemy had lost almost forty men. For this low price, the Allies had secured a forward area which lay in the heart of previously-held Japanese territory. The Hollandia area was to prove an excellent air, naval, and logistic base from which future operations in western New Guinea were to be staged and protected, and from which a large part of the force which invaded the Philippines in October 1944 set sail.[38]

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38 ALAMO FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, pp. 31, 58; ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 43, 31 May 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files.

CHAPTER IV

The Japanese: Pearl Harbor Through Hollandia

The Hollandia operation had proven an unexpectedly easy tactical success. The Allies had sent 1 2/3 divisions, heavily reinforced, into the area on the assumption that 14,000 Japanese, including two regiments of infantry, would be encountered there.[1] Just prior to 22 April, revised estimates had raised the total to 15,000 men, of whom only 1,000 were thought to be combat personnel.[2] But no strong, and only a little co-ordinated, Japanese resistance was found at Hollandia. At first, when no fighting occurred at the beachheads, it was considered probable by General MacArthur's Intelligence Section that the enemy had withdrawn inland to make a final, determined stand around the airfields.[3] Even this opposition failed to materialize. It appears that there were about 11,000 Japanese of all services at Hollandia on D Day, and that

1 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.

2 GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI No. 755, 16 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 16 Apr 44. This revised estimate occured too late to affect Allied plans.

3 GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI No. 764, 25 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 25 Apr 44.

less than 500 antiaircraft artillerymen represented the ground combat element of the Japanese Army.[4]

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4 ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 44, 7 Jun 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files; 18th Army Opns, III, 41 - 48; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 31, History of the 2d Area Army, pp. 48 - 51, copy in OCMH files. The ALAMO FORCE source states that 8,981 Japanese were at Hollandia on 22 April, while 18th Army Opns, III, gives two figures: The first is as of ten days prior to the Allied landings and gives a total of 14,700, while the second sets a figure of 10,000 Japanese Army personnel and 1,00 Japanese Navy troops. In the light of other estimates, the first 18th Army figure is believed to overlook the number of pilots and Japanese Army Air Force ground crew men evacuated from Hollandia during the two weeks prior to 22 April and the losses due to casualties from Allied air action during the period 12 - 22 April. The 2d Area Army source states that approximately 10,000 Japanese were present at Hollandia on 22 April..

The Japanese were strangely ill-prepared adequately to defend the potentially powerful base, both strategically and tactically, that Hollandia was. The reasons are manifold. First, the Japanese had been caught by surprise. Second, there had been sweeping changes in their command structure at Hollandia just before 22 April. Third, there was not enough combat equipment in the area even properly to arm the thousands of service troops who were available. Finally, and most important, time had worked against the Japanese in the case of

Hollandia just as time had worked against them throughout the Pacific since their initial successes in late 1941 and early 1942.

Strategy and Dispositions to April 1944

The Japanese Situation to Mid-1943

The Japanese entered World War II with limited objectives in mind, and, contrary to Clausewitz' principles of warfare, had no plan to press home their attacks nor to meet and defeat the main body of the forces opposing them. Initially, the Japanese intended only to knock out the U.S. Pacific Fleet, to seize Malaya and the Netherlands East Indies, to occupy the Philippine Islands, and to gain control over a defensive perimeter reaching southwestward from the Kuriles (north of Japan) through Wake Island, the Marianas, the Carolines, and the Marshalls to Rabaul, on New Britain Island in the Southwest Pacific Area. After they attained these objectives, the Japanese expected to obtain from the United States and Britain a negotiated peace which would leave Japan in possession of a "Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere."

Quickly, in late 1941 and early 1942, the Japanese seized their initial perimeter and brought under military control most of the contemplated Greater East Asia area except for southern China. But the expected negotiated peace did not transpire. On the contrary, the United States and Britain gave every indication that they would fight back. The United States began to develop a line of communications to Australia and to reinforce that continent as a base for future operations.[5]

5 Interr of Flt Adm Osamu Nagano (IJN), (Chief of the Navy Section, Imperial GHQ, and Supreme Naval Adviser to the Emperor), 30 Nov 45, in United States Strategic Bombing Survey (USSBS), Interr No. 498, copy in OCMH files; USSBS, Summary Report (Pacific War), (Washington, 1946), p. 2.

Returning to plans considered but not approved prior to the war,[6]

6 As outlined in Combined Fleet Top Secret Opn-Order No. 1, 5 Nov 41, translation in Joint Congressional Investigation Committee, Pearl Harbor Attack, (Washington, 194), Part XIII, Exhibit No. 8, pp. 431 - 84.

Japanese Imperial General Headquarters, early in 1942, decided to expand the perimeter already seized. Discarding as impossible of execution a Japanese Navy plan to take Australia, Imperial General Headquarters determined to cut the line of communications from the United States to Australia by occupying New Caledonia, the Fiji Islands, and Samoa. Flank protection for the new perimeter was to be obtained on the south by the seizure of Port Moresby, in southeastern New Guinea, and on the north by securing bases in the American Aleutian Islands. The Japanese hoped that the United States would wear itself out in attacks against the new perimeter and thus afford Japan a second chance for a negotiated peace.[7]

7 Japanese Studies in World War II, No. 72, History of the Army

Section, Imperial GHQ, pp. 45 - 46, 50 - 54, copy in OCMH files.

During the spring and summer of 1942 the initial Japanese attempts to expand the perimeter met with disaster during the Battles of Coral Sea and Midway. Undaunted, the Japanese expanded southward from Rabaul down the chain of Solomon Islands to seize air bases in preparation for the advance to Fiji, New Caledonia, and Samoa. At the same time, they attempted to capture Port Moresby by overland action. American landings at Guadalcanal in the Solomons during August stopped the Japanese expansion to the southeast, and Australian troops threw the enemy back from Port Moresby later in the year. The Japanese realized by September 1942 that they had overreached themselves and directed their energies to strengthening their forces in eastern New Guinea, the Solomons, and the Bismarck Archipelago.[8]

8 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 50 - 66.

To control operations in those areas, the Japanese, in November 1942, established at Rabaul the headquarters of the 8th Area Army. Under this headquarters was placed the 17th Army, already operating in the Solomons and eastern New Guinea, and the 18th Army, which was set up at Rabaul in November to take over control of operations in eastern New Guinea. About the same time, the 6th Air Division was organized, placed under the 8th Area Army's control, and sent to New Guinea. The 17th Army failed in attempts to retake Guadalcanal and was withdrawn from that island in early February 1944. In eastern New Guinea the 18th Army fared no better in trying to maintain its

hold on the north coast of Papua at Buna and Gona. The two campaigns made heavy inroads in Japanese ground, air, and naval strength and Imperial General Headquarters paused to take stock.[9]

9 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 68 - 74; Mil Intel Div, War Dept, Disposition and Movement of Japanese Ground Forces, 1941 - 45, copy in OCMH files; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 38, Southeast Area Air Operations, pp. 2 - 4, copy in OCMH files.

At the close of 1942 Imperial General Headquarters estimated that the Allies intended to conduct a two-pronged drive at Rabaul, then the principal Japanese forward base in the Southwest Pacific Area, from eastern New Guinea and the Solomons. Following this, the Japanese expected that the Allies would move up the northern coast of New Guinea toward the Philippines and, possibly, conduct another advance toward the Philippines from northwestern Australia through the Netherlands East Indies. Recognizing that the initiative had been lost and faced with a lack of shipping and diminishing air and naval power, Imperial General Headquarters decided upon a strategic withdrawal in order to build up defenses against the expected Allied drives and to prepare bases from which future offensives might be launched.

Accordingly, on 4 January 1943, Japan set up a defensive line running through the southern Indies to Wewak on the northeastern coast of New Guinea, about halfway between Hollandia and the Buna - Gona area. From Wewak the line ran eastward to Lae and Salamaua whence it jumped to the south coast of New Britain, up to Rabaul, and

south along the Solomons to New Georgia. To the north the line ran through the Gilbert Islands, the Marianas, Wake, and the Aleutians.

The 17th Army now began building new defenses in the northern Solomons. Lt. Gen. Hatazo Adachi, commanding the 18th Army, moved his headquarters from Rabaul to Lae in February 1943 and prepared to defend what was left of eastern New Guinea. To strengthen the area the 41st Division, previously stationed in China, was moved to eastern New Guinea in February. The bulk of the 51st Division, part of which was already in New Guinea, began shuttling to that island from New Britain about the same time. The 20th Division, already in eastern New Guinea, was placed under General Adachi's command in April.[10]

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10 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 70 - 78; Mil Intel Div, War Dept, op. cit.; Japanese Studies in World War II, No. 37, History of the 8th Area Army, 1942 - 45, pp. 10 - 11, copy in OCMH files.

Operations in the Philippines and Netherlands East Indies since the beginning of the war had been under the control of the Southern Army,[11] subordinate to which was the 14th Army in the Philippines and

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11 Some translations render the Southern Army as Southern Area Army.

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the 16th Army in the Indies. On 7 January 1943, the 19th Army was set up under the Southern Army to take over from the 16th Army responsibility for Timor, the islands in the Arafura Sea, Dutch New Guinea, Ceram, Ambon, Halmahera, and Morotai. The 48th Division, in the Indies since

early 1942, and the newly-arrived 5th Division, were placed under the 19th Army, which established its command post at Ambon. Troops and supplies destined for the 19th Army passed through the Philippines, while the Palau Islands, already in use to some extent for such purposes, assumed new importance as a staging area through which men and equipment going to the 8th Area Army passed. Initially the boundary between the 19th and 18th Armies (and therefore between the Southern and 8th Area Armies) was the Dutch - Australian international border across central New Guinea. But in April 1943, this boundary was changed to 140 degrees east longitude in order to place Hollandia within the 8th Area Army's zone of responsibility.[12]

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12 Hist of 8th Area Army, p. 11; Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 4 - 6; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 21, History of the Southern Area Army, 1941 - 45, pp. 29 - 35, copy in OCMH files.

Japanese Strategic Withdrawals to April 1944

Slow but steady Allied progress in eastern New Guinea and the Solomons during the spring and summer of 1943 prompted Imperial General Headquarters to send air reinforcements to the 8th Area Army. The 7th Air Division, organized in January 1943 for operations in the Netherlands East Indies, was transferred to the command of the 8th Area Army in May, and began sending planes to eastern New Guinea in June. To co-ordinate the operations of the 6th and 7th Air Divisions, the headquarters of the 4th Air Army was set up at Rabaul under Lt. Gen. Kumaichi Teramoto, who was subordinate to the 8th Area Army commander, General Hitoshi Immamura. The 6th Air Division was to concentrate its

strength at Rabaul, the Admiralty Islands, Wewak, and Hansa Bay, east of Wewak. The 7th Air Division was to develop rear area bases, including But and Boikin near Wewak, and Aitape and Hollandia.[13]

13 Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 13 - 18; Hist of 8th Area Army, pp. 15 - 31.

In September 1943 the pace of Allied operations in eastern New Guinea was accelerated and it appeared to the Japanese that an invasion of New Britain was imminent. Unable to think of any feasible way to reinforce the area in the face of increasing Allied air and naval action, Imperial General Headquarters decided upon another strategic withdrawal. Having already lost the Aleutians, Japan established a new Main Line of Resistance along the line southern Indies, Dutch New Guinea, the Carolines, and the Marianas back to the Kuriles. The former all-important eastern New Guinea - Bismarck Archipelago - northern Solomons area was relegated to the status of a holding front while behind the new Main Line of Resistance ground strength was to be rebuilt and new air and naval power was to be mustered. By the spring of 1944 the rebuilding was to be so complete that offensive operations, including a naval showdown, could be resumed in mid-summer.[14]

14 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 84 - 96; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 50, Southeast Area Naval Operations, III, 2 - 5, copy in OCMH files.

Rabaul was to remain the center of the holding front area. Hansa Bay, previously the main port of entry for large ships taking supplies and troops to the 8th Area Army, was to become a small boat base. Hollandia was to take the place of Hansa Bay as the principal unloading point and Hollandia was also to be developed into a major base from which the mid-1944 offensives might be supported. The distribution point for the eastern Indies and Dutch New Guinea was to be Halmahera, while Manokwari, on the Vogelkop Peninsula of western New Guinea, was to become the main supply base for western New Guinea. Other air and supply bases were to be developed at Sorong, at the western tip of the Vogelkop, and on the islands in Geelvink Bay. Palau was to retain its status as a strategic area for men and supplies moving southeastward toward New Guinea.[15]

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15 Southeast Area Naval Opns, III, 4; Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, p. 92; Hist of Southern Area Army, pp. 44 - 47; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 42, 18th Army Operations, II, 134, copy in OCMH files.

In October and November 1943 Allied forces of the South Pacific Area drove up the chain of Solomon Islands to Bougainville, stronghold of the 17th Army; Central Pacific forces invaded the Gilberts; and Southwest Pacific Area troops trapped part of the 18th Army on the Huon Peninsula of eastern New Guinea. The Japanese Navy sent the bulk of its carrier-based air strength to Rabaul in a vain attempt to stem the tide of Allied advance, but this move ended in disaster

for most of the Navy's effective air strength and resulted in the temporary immobilization of the Japanese Fleet.[16]

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16 Southeast Area Naval Opns, III, 5; GHQ SWPA, G - 3 Hist Div, Chronology of the War in the SWPA, 1941 - 45, copy in OCMH files.

Imperial General Headquarters now gave up hope of long holding the eastern New Guinea - Solomons - Bismarck Archipelago area and became perturbed about the opening of a new Allied front in the Central Pacific, presaged by the invasion of the Gilberts. Imperial General Headquarters was again worried lest the Allies mount an offensive toward the Philippines from northwestern Australia, and it still firmly believed that a drive northwest up the north coast of New Guinea was to be undertaken by the forces under General MacArthur's command. To strengthen the eastern Indies and western New Guinea, plans were made to send the 36th and 46th Divisions to that area from China. To control future operations in the region, the Headquarters, 2d Area Army was sent south from Manchuria to Davao, Mindanao, in the Philippines, where it arrived during late November 1943. Sent south with Lt. Gen. Korechika Anami's 2d Area Army headquarters was the headquarters of the 2d Army, under Lt. Gen. Fusataro Teshima, who established his command post at Manokwari on the Vogelkop Peninsula. The 2d Army and the 19th Army (under Lt. Gen. Kenzo Kitano) were both placed under the control of the 2d Area Army which, in turn, was directly under Imperial General Headquarters. The 2d Area Army was to hold the area from 140 degrees east longitude west to Macassar

Strait and south from 5 degrees north latitude. Hollandia remained within the 8th Area Army's zone of responsibility.[17]

17 Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 9 - 13; 2d Area Army Opn-Plan No. A-1, 23 Nov 43, as cited in Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 14 - 21; Hist of Southern Area Army, pp. 45 - 47; Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 94 - 96. General Kitano, the 19th Army commander, commanded the 4th Division in the Philippines in 1942. The 4th Division spearheaded the final Japanese drive which resulted in the American surrender on Bataan and Corregidor.

The 36th Division began arriving at Sarmi, 125 miles west of Hollandia, in December 1943, and one regiment, the 222d Infantry, reached Biak Island in Geelvink Bay the same month. Remnants of the 46th Division, most of which was sunk in transit by Allied submarines, arrived in the Lesser Soendas about the same time. The 36th Division passed to the control of the 2d Army and the 46th Division was placed under the command of the 19th Army. The 7th Air Division, which had hardly started moving toward eastern New Guinea, was taken out from under the control of the 8th Area Army and reassigned to the 2d Area Army. Lt. Gen. Einosuke Sudo established the air division headquarters at Ambon in mid-November, and shortly thereafter his remaining planes came flying westward.[18] Finally, to strengthen the front against the threat of Allied

18 Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 32, 2d Army Operations in the Western New Guinea Area, pp. 1 - 2, copy in OCMH files; Hist of Southern

Area Army, pp. 44 - 57; Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 25 - 29; Interr of Col Rinsuka Kaneko (JAAF), 21 Nov 45, in USSBS [Pacific], Naval Analysis Division, Interrogations of Japanese Officials, 2 vols. (Washington, 1946, OPNAV - P - 03 - 100), II, 404 - 08; 2d Area Army Opn-Order, (no number), 28 Nov 43, as translated in GHQ SWPA, ATIS Current Translation No. 131, 31 Jul 44.

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advance across the central Pacific, Imperial General Headquarters dispatched the 52d Division to the Carolines. There it and other Japanese Army units either already in the central Pacific or on their way to that area passed to the operational control of the Combined Fleet.[19]

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19 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, p. 93; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 55, Central Pacific Operations, pp. 17 - 18, copy in OCMH files.

During the last months of 1943 and the opening months of 1944, the pace of Allied operations on all fronts in the Pacific was stepped up. In the Southwest Pacific Area the entire Huon Peninsula area was cleared of Japanese troops and a foothold was seized in western New Britain. In the South Pacific Area the Japanese could not stem the Allied advance in the northern Solomons, and the Allies moved on to seize an airfield site on Green Island, east of Rabaul and within easy fighter range of that base. The final steps in the isolation of Rabaul were the seizure of the Admiralty Islands by Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific Area at the end of February 1944, and the capture of Emirau Island by South Pacific Area troops in March. In the Allied

Central Pacific Area events were moving equally rapidly. Early in February Allied forces invaded the Marshall Islands. At mid-month, carrier-based aircraft of the U.S. Pacific Fleet struck heavily at Truk, in the Carolines, previously the Combined Fleet's strongest advance base.[20]

20 GHQ SWPA, G - 3 Hist Div, Chronology of the War in the SWPA.

The Japanese high command was again forced to issue withdrawal orders and to make attempts to strengthen forward area positions. The Allied advances in eastern New Guinea prompted the 8th Area Army to order the 18th Army to retreat to Madang. On 8 January 1944, Lt. Gen. Hatazo Adachi, commanding the 18th Army, moved his headquarters by submarine from Sio, on the Huon Peninsula, to Madang, only eight days before Australian troops seized Sio. Shortly after that narrow escape, General Adachi moved his command post still further westward to Wewak.[21]

21 Hist of 8th Area Army, p. 46; Mil Intel Div, War Dept, op. cit.; Interr of Capt Shigeru Iwaki (IJN), 21 Feb 46, in GHQ SCAP, ATIS Doc No. 14924-A, copy in OCMH files.

About 10 February the Combined Fleet, recognizing that the establishment of Allied air bases on the Admiralties and Marshalls would bring all the Carolines within range of Allied bombers, decided that the Truk fleet base was no longer tenable. The opinion was forcibly strengthened by the Pacific Fleet carrier strike on Truk later in the month, and Combined Fleet headquarters was moved to the

Palaus. About the same time, the Japanese Navy abandoned all hope of conducting successful operations in the Bismarck Archipelago - northern Solomons area and withdrew the last remnants of its air power from Rabaul.[22]

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22 Southeast Area Naval Opns, III, 2 - 9; Interr of Comdr Chikataka Nakajima (IJN), (staff of CinC, Combined Fleet), 22 Nov 45, in USSBS, Interrogations of Japanese Officials, II, 432 - 35.

More drastic redispositions and new changes in command structure were effected by both the Japanese Army and Navy in March and early April 1944. The Combined Fleet had no intention of making the Palaus a permanent base, but planned to use it only as a temporary advanced anchorage until new base facilities in the Philippines could be developed. The ultimate withdrawal of Combined Fleet headquarters and surface units from the Palaus was speeded by the carrier raids of the U.S. Fifth Fleet on those islands at the end of March, when the carriers were providing strategic support for the Hollandia operation. The Japanese Navy, as a result of these carrier raids and, later, the obvious threat of Allied land-based bomber attacks on the Palaus from Hollandia, gave up the Palaus as a loss.

But Imperial General Headquarters, in March, had not gone so far, and was still determined to strengthen the positions in the central Pacific. Accordingly, early in March, the Headquarters, 31st Army, Maj. Gen. Eiryo Obata commanding, was set up on Guam in the Marianas to exercise command, under direction of the Combined Fleet, of all Japanese

Army units in the central Pacific islands. The 29th Division was sent out to the Marianas in March also, and plans were made to send the 43d Division to the same islands.[23]

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23 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, p. 93; Central Pacific Opns, pp. 17 - 18; Mil Intel Div, War Dept, Order of Battle of the Japanese Armed Forces, 1 Mar 45, pp. 72, 100. The 43d Division's convoy encountered heavy losses on the trip to the Marianas, but the remnants of the division arrived in the island in May.

The portion of the Main Line of Resistance for which the 31st Army was responsible extended along the line Bonins - Volcanos - Marianas - Ponape - Truk - Woeai - Yap - Palau. At the Palaus, the line tied into the 2d Area Army's zone of responsibility. So far, the Palaus had been little more than a staging area, and few combat troops were on the islands. In March, line of communications troops, replacements, and rear echelons of various 8th Area Army units in the Palaus passed with their commander, Maj. Gen. Takeo Yamaguchi, to the control of the 2d Area Army. More wide-sweeping changes were due in the Palaus, for by March Imperial General Headquarters was worried that the Palaus were to become an immediate target for Allied invasions. Accordingly, it was decided to send strong reinforcements to the Palaus, and the 35th Division was dispatched to the islands from northern China. The division was delayed as a result of Allied submarine attacks on the convoy carrying it southward, but the 219th Infantry (less one battalion) and a battalion of the 35th Field Artillery Regiment landed in the Palaus during March. The remainder of the division continued on to Halmahera and western New Guinea via the Philippines.

The U. S. Fifth Fleet's carrier raid on the Palaus at the end of March apparently prompted Imperial General Headquarters to expect an invasion of the Palaus in the near future. Obviously, the under-strength regimental combat team of the 35th Division could not hold the islands, and it was therefore decided to ship the 14th Division from Manchuria to the Palaus. Destined originally for western New Guinea and later for the Marianas, the 14th Division finally set sail for the Palaus early in April and arrived in the islands

safely on the 24th of the month, just two days after the Allied landings at Hollandia. During the ensuing weeks, the elements of the 35th Division already in the Palaus left those island and rejoined their parent unit in western New Guinea. Lt. Gen. Sadae Inoue, commanding the 14th Division, was appointed Commander, Palau Sector Group, in which capacity his area of responsibility included Yap as well as the Palaus. General Yamaguchi's staging area forces already in the Palaus passed to General Inoue's command, probably about the same time that the 14th Division arrived in the islands.[24]

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24 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 87 - 93, 96, 109, 121 - 23; Central Pacific Opns, pp. 17 - 18; Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 56, The Palau Operations, pp. 4 - 5, 45 - 47, 57 - 61, copy in OCMH files.

Equally widesweeping changes had been made to the south. Recognizing that the 8th Area Army and the 17th Army were irretrievably cut off, Imperial General Headquarters, on 14 March 1944, wrote them off as a loss, ordering them to hold out as best they could. At the same time, the 18th Army and the 4th Air Army were transferred to the jurisdiction of the 2d Area Army, for it was evident that the 8th Area Army could no longer exercise effective control over the two units. The boundary between the 2d and 8th Area Armies was moved eastward to 147 degrees east longitude (the Admiralties, however, remained under the 8th Area Army). The 18th Army, then reorganizing at Madang, was brought well within the 2d Area Army's zone, as were the Japanese bases at Hansa Bay, Wewak, Aitape, and Hollandia.

Imperial General Headquarters ordered the 2d Area Army to hold all the territory west of Wewak within its zone and to pull the 18th Army west from Madang to Wewak, Aitape, and Hollandia. The 2d Area Army was also instructed to develop Hollandia into a major supply base, but neither this development nor the 18th Army's withdrawal was to interfere with more important defense preparations in western New Guinea and the islands between the Vogelkop Peninsula and the Philippines. Given this leeway, the 2d Area Army decided to concentrate its efforts in strengthening a Main Line of Resistance along

the line from the Lesser Soendas, through the Aroe Islands in the Arafura Sea, north to Mimika on the southwest coast of Dutch New Guinea, and thence to the Wakde - Sarmi area, 125 miles west of Hollandia. Although this decision would obviously leave the 18th Army out in the cold insofar as supplies or reinforcements were concerned, Imperial General Headquarters approved the 2d Area Army's plan without recorded comment.[25]

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25 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 107 - 11; 2d Area Army Opn-Order A-46, 20 Mar 44, as translated in ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 48, 5 Jul 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files.

To strengthen the 2d Area Army the 32d and 35th Divisions (the latter was originally intended for the Palaus) were sent to western New Guinea and Halamahera, where they began arriving in late April. Redispositions of air power were also made. The 4th Air Army and the 6th Air Division moved their headquarters from Wewak to Hollandia in mid-March (both had moved from Rabaul to Wewak in late 1943). The 6th Air Division was practically wiped out by Allied air attacks at Hollandia during March and April, but its headquarters remained at Hollandia. The 4th Air Army's headquarters moved west from Hollandia on 15 April and re-established its command post at Menado in the Celebes, to which town the 2d Area Army moved its headquarters from Davao a few days later. On 15 April, for unknown reasons, the 2d Area Army passed from the direct control of Imperial General Headquarters to the intermediate link of the Southern Army, and at the same time the 4th Air Army came under the direct command of the Southern Army.[26]

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26 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp.111 - 13, 120 - 23; Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 47 - 48, 53 - 55; Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 16 - 18, 36; 18th Army Opns, III, 41 - 46; 4th Air Army Opn-Order A-250, 22 Mar 44, in GHQ SWPA, ATIS Enemy Publication No. 268, 4 Jan 45, copy in OCMH files; Interr of Col Rinsuka Kaneko (JAAF), 21 Nov 45, in USSBS, Interrogations of Japanese Officials, II, 404 - 08.

Halmahera, in the 2d Area Army's zone, became the principal distribution point for the eastern part of the Netherlands East Indies and for Dutch New Guinea, and Halmahera also gradually developed into a focal point for the Japanese defense of the southern approaches to the Philippines. The Palau's former status as a major staging base was gradually curtailed, and the islands lost their importance to the 2d Area Army.[27] The latter unit was again

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27 ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation with Respect to Morotai, 1 Aug 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Morotai, 2 - 8 Aug 44; ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpts Nos. 44 and 51, 7 Jun and 26 Jul 44, respectively, copies in G - 2 DofA files; Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 53 - 55.

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instructed by Imperial General Headquarters rapidly to develop behind the new Main Line of Resistance supply and staging bases from which a general offensive might be resumed in mid-1944.[28]

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28 Hist of Army Section Imperial GHQ, pp. 84 - 96.

Japan's Pacific Order of Battle, April 1944

Thus, in the area of principal immediate interest to Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific as they moved toward Hollandia in April 1944, the Japanese high command centered in General Count Hisaichi Terauchi's Southern Army, with headquarters at Manila.[29] Under the Southern Army was the 2d Area

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29 Evidence is conflicting as to whether the Southern Army's headquarters was at Manila or Singapore at this time. At any rate, the headquarters moved to Manila in the period March - May 1944.

Army, headquarters at Menado, which in turn controlled the 2d, 18th, and 19th Armies. The 2d Area Army had perhaps 150,000 troops under its command. In western New Guinea and the Halmahera region was the 2d Army, headquarters at Manokari, comprising the 32d, 35th and 36th Divisions and miscellaneous

other units and totalling about 50,000 men. The strength of the 19th Army, spread over most of the rest of the Netherlands East Indies, was also about 50,000 troops, centered around the 5th, 46th, and 48th Divisions.

The 8th Area Army, controlled directly by Imperial General Headquarters, retained under its command the 17th Army, the 38th Division, the 65th Brigade, and the remnants of the 6th and 17th Divisions. Total strength of the 8th Area Army in April 1944 was perhaps 80,000 men. In the Philippines, the Southern Army had under its command the 14th Army, comprising the 16th Division and four independent mixed brigades. The 14th Army had about 45,000 combat troops under its control, and total Japanese strength in the Philippines was about 100,000 men, including air, naval, and army service personnel. On the Pacific Islands was the 31st Army, under the operational control of the Combined Fleet and consisting of the 14th, 29th, and 52d Divisions, and the 43d Division on the way. The 31st Army was about 50,000 men strong. In the Palaus were the 14th Division and other units, including naval and air, totalling about 30,000 men.30

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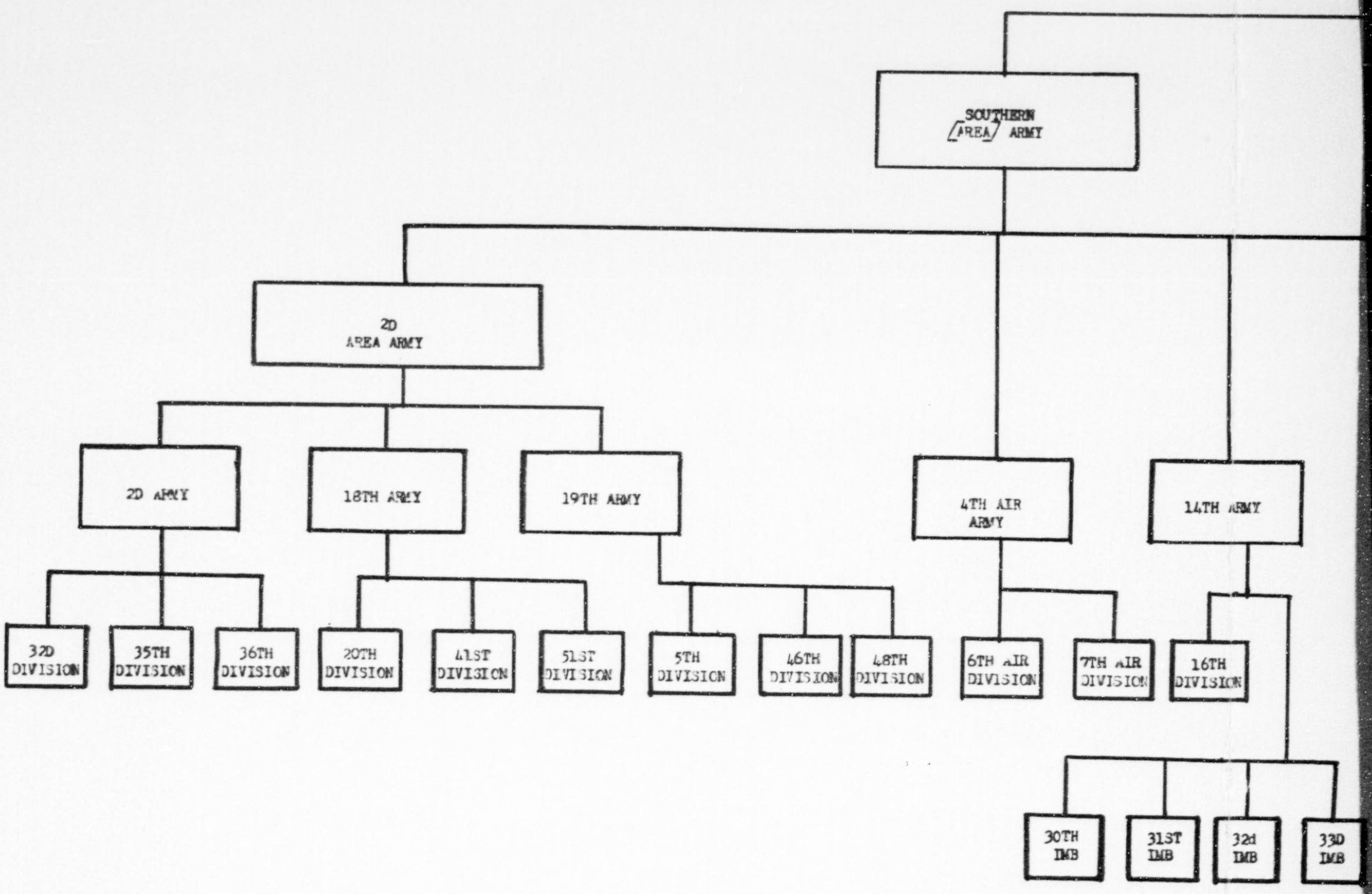
30 The figures given above were derived by Mr. Burke C. Peterson, of the Pacific Section, OCMH, from a mass of Japanese and Allied sources. The location of units was derived from the Japanese Army sources cited in the preceding section.

When the 18th Army passed to the control of the 2d Area Army on 14 March 1944, General Adachi had under his control about 55,000 men. His three infantry divisions, the 20th, 41st, and 51st, had all been badly battered in fighting in eastern New Guinea and, since January, had been suffering heavy casualties during withdrawal from the Huon Peninsula area. At the time of the change in command, the 20th Division was painfully reorganizing at Madang (east of which it was fighting a rear guard action against Australian troops) and Hansa Bay. The 41st Division was deployed in the Madang area and was preparing to move westward, while the 51st Division was assembling at Wewak for rehabilitation and reorganization. The total

CHART NO. 5

Japanese Army Operational Organization in the Southwest Pacific Area

(April 1944)



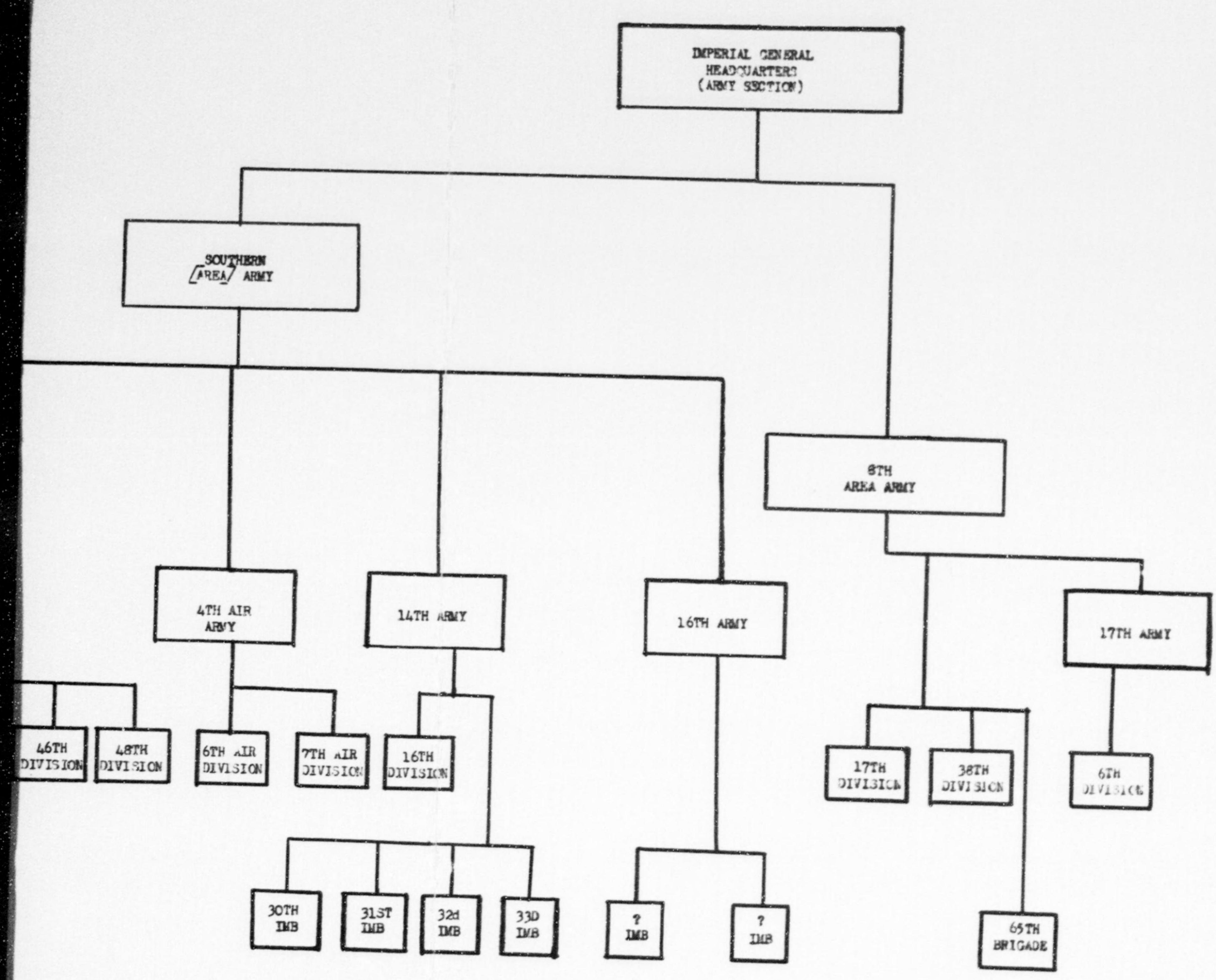
IMB = INDEPENDENT MIXED BRIGADE

FOR THE 31ST ARMY SEE CHART NO. 6

CHART NO. 5

Army Operational Organization in the Southwest Pacific Area

(April 1944)



combat strength of the three divisions at the time of the Allied landings at Hollandia probably did not exceed 20,000 trained infantry effectives.[31]

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31 Mil Intel Div, War Dept, Disposition and Movement of Japanese Ground Forces, 1941 - 45, copy in OCMH files; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 Monthly Summary of Enemy Dispositions, 30 April 1944, copy in OCMH files; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI's Nos. 761 and 828, 22 Apr and 28 Jun 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnls, 22 Apr and 28 Jun 44; Japanese Studies in WW II, 18th Army Operations, Annex A -- Statistics, Supplementary Chart No. 1, copy in OCMH files. Definitive figures for the strength of the 18th Army in April 1944 are simply not available and all sources are contradictory. General MacArthur's Intelligence Section put the 18th Army strength for April at about 45,000 men. ALAMO FORCE and the Allied Land Forces consistently gave much higher estimates, running from 55,000 to 65,000, while the Japanese source cites a figure of about 75,000 for 1 April.

Co-operating with the 18th Army was the Japanese 9th Fleet, principal Japanese naval headquarters in New Guinea. The 9th Fleet's commander was Vice Adm. Kiichi Endo (IJN), whose command post was located at Wewak until late March, when it moved to Hollandia. Admiral Endo's command consisted primarily of service troops, naval antiaircraft gunners, and a few shore defense units. His navy contained only a miscellaneous collection of landing craft and armed barges. The majority of the naval service troops in eastern New Guinea were members of the 27th Special Base Force, commanded by Capt. Shigeru Iwaki (IJN), one of Admiral Endo's subordinates. Most of the few Japanese naval personnel at Hollandia were apparently members of the 6th South Seas Detachment and were commanded by Capt. Tetsuo Onitaba (IJN), who commanded all naval land-based troops in the Hollandia area.[32]

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32 Interr of Capt Shigeru Iwaki (IJN), 21 Feb 46, in GHQ SCAP, ATIS Doc No. 14924-A, copy in OCMH files; Interr of Capt Toshikazu Ohmae (IJN), 25 Nov 25, in USSBS, Interrogations of Japanese Officials, II, 409 - 10; GHQ SCAP, ATIS, Full Translation of Answers to Questions Concerning the Admiralties and Hollandia, 14 Apr 46, in Mil Intel Div War Dept, Doc No. 261219, copy in OCMH files; 18th Army Opns, III, 41.

In western New Guinea, acting in concert with the 2d Area Army, was the the 4th Expeditionary Fleet, commanded by Rear Adm. Seiko Yamagata (IJN). The next step up the Japanese naval chain of command was the Southwestern Fleet, controlling all Japanese naval units in the Netherlands East Indies area and operating under the direction of the Combined Fleet. The 9th Fleet, formerly under the Southeastern Fleet's headquarters at Rabaul, passed to the control of Southwestern Fleet in March 1944.[33]

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33 Japanese Studies in WW II, No. 34, Naval Operations in the Western New Guinea Area, 1943 - 45, pp. 1 - 10, copy in OCMH files.

There were a few naval aircraft based at Hollandia from time to time, but Japanese naval air power was, generally speaking, a negligible factor in the New Guinea and Netherlands East Indies areas in April 1944. The Japanese Army Air Force, after the destruction of the 6th Air Division at Hollandia and the withdrawal of the 4th Air Army's headquarters from New Guinea, likewise had little left with which to stem an Allied advance in New Guinea. The 4th Air Army had never been at full strength during its operations in the Bismarck Archipelago and New Guinea areas. Its heavy combat losses were aggravated by poor equipment, inadequate aircraft maintenance, supply difficulties, and rough fields which could not be kept in repair. Its history in New Guinea was principally one of frustration.[34]

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34 Southeast Area Air Opns, pp. 16 - 18, 36; 4th Air Army Opns-Order No. A-250, 22 Mar 44, as translated in GHQ SWPA, ATIS Enemy Publication No. 268, 4 Jan 45, copy in OCMH files; Interr of Col Rinsuka Kaneko (JAAF), 21 Nov 45, in USSBS, Interrogations of Japanese Officals, II, 404 - 08.

The Japanese at Hollandia

Japanese Planning and Command at Hollandia

The Japanese high command had been for some time aware of the

CHART NO. 6

Japanese Naval Operational Organization in the

Central and Southwest Pacific Areas

(April 1944)

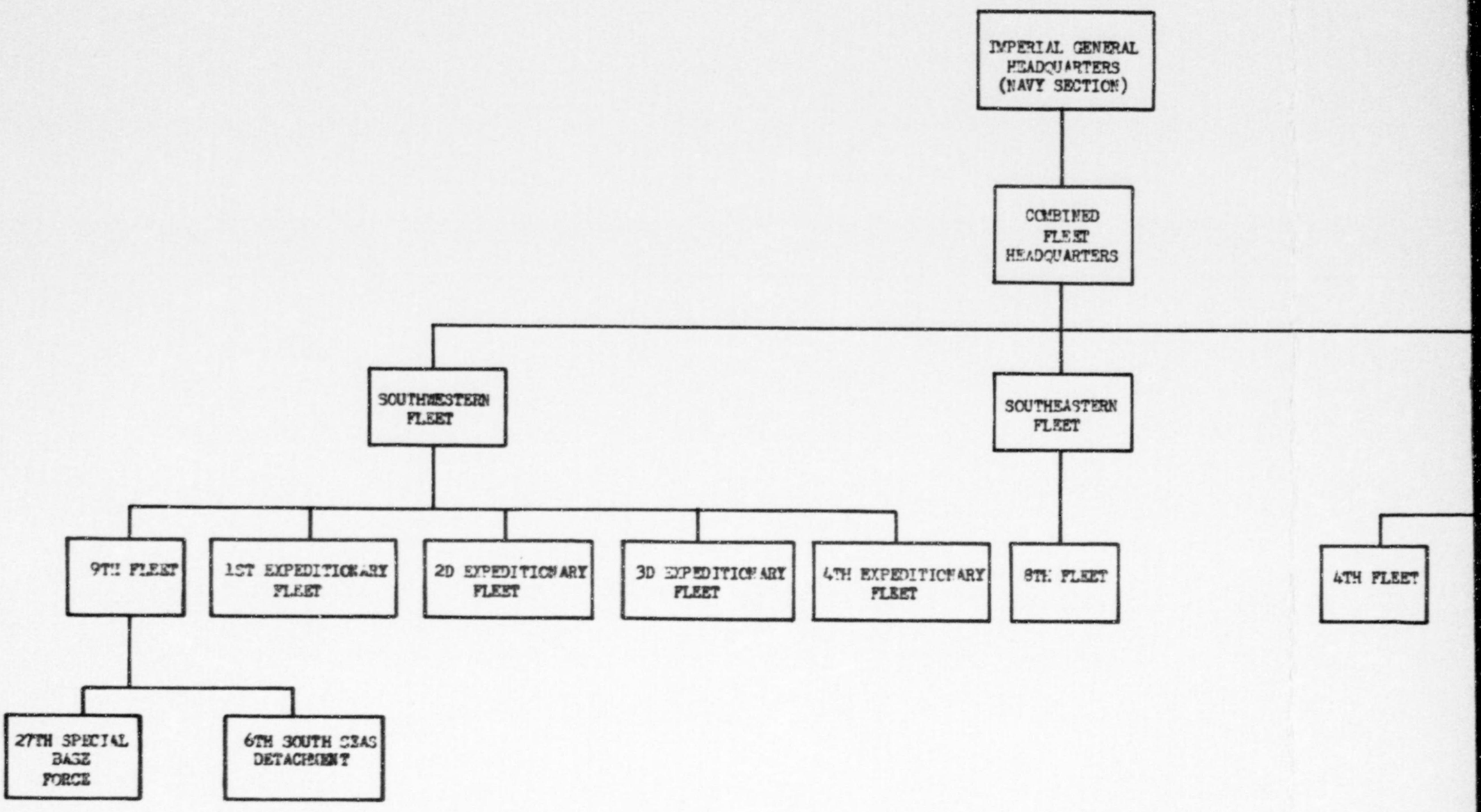
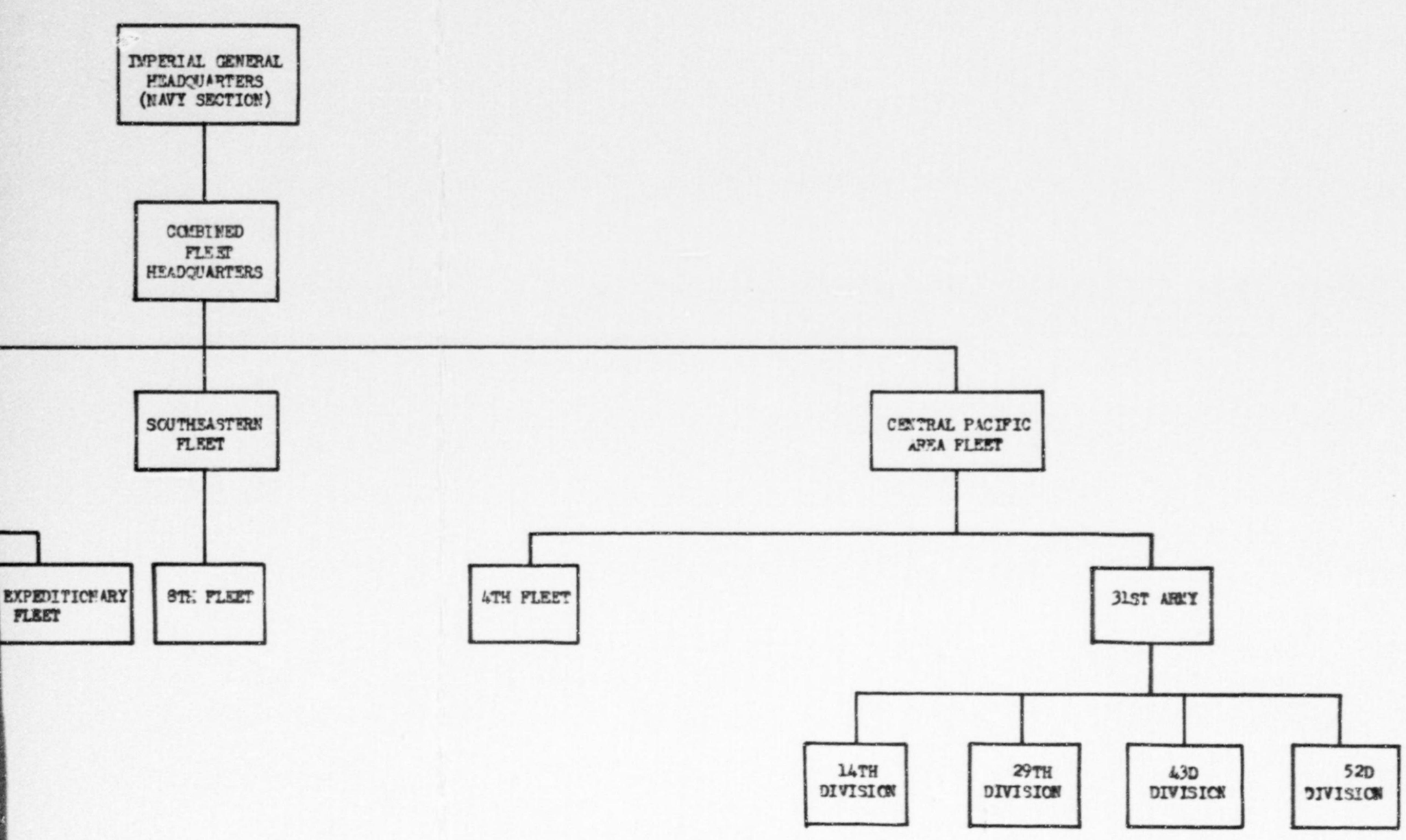


CHART NO. 6

Japanese Naval Operational Organization in the

Central and Southwest Pacific Areas

(April 1944)



potential importance of Hollandia and of the necessity for building up the defenses of the area and had decided to develop a major base at Hollandia as early as the withdrawal of the Main Line of Resistance in September 1943. [35]

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35 History of Southern Area Army, pp. 90 - 96.

The 2d Area Army, when it took over control in western New Guinea in November, perceived that holding Hollandia would have great advantages and believed that Hollandia ought to be strongly defended as an outpost for the protection of the Main Line of Resistance base at Wakde - Sarmi, to the west. General Anami, commanding the 2d Area Army, in November gave some thought to sending elements of the 36th Division east from Sarmi to Hollandia. This plan was abandoned however, for at the time Hollandia was still within the 8th Area Army's zone of responsibility.[36]

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36 Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 22 - 23, 26 - 27.

The 18th Army (if not the 8th Area Army) attached some importance to Hollandia. In January 1944 General Adachi stated that Hollandia was to be "... the final base and last strategic point of [the 18th Army's] New Guinea operations."[37] He outlined a plan for the 18th Army's withdrawal to

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37 18th Army Opn-Order (no number), 22 Jan 44, as translated in ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 39, 3 May 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files.

Hollandia should its operations in eastern New Guinea result in defeat, and he ordered the forces at Hollandia to exert themselves to develop the defenses of that base. General Adachi complained that the troops at Hollandia, being out of the active combat zone, were leading a life of ease, and he hinted that all was not well with the command structure at the base. In an address to the Hollandia garrison, delivered by proxy during January, the general exhorted forces there to expend "... all your effort and be determined to

sacrifice everything for the glorious cause."[38] But exhortations were hardly

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38 Ibid.; 18th Army Opns, II, 141 - 46.

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sufficient -- some definite plan of action for the development and defense of Hollandia was needed.

The 2d Area Army supplied the outline of such a plan when it assumed control of the 18th Army in March. General Adachi was instructed to hold firmly at Wewak, Aitape, and Hollandia; to institute a delaying action westward from Madang and Wewak; to use and cooperate with the 4th Air Army during this withdrawal; and gradually to consolidate the bulk of the 18th Army at Hollandia. General Adachi was to start withdrawing all his forces west from Madang and Hansa Bay beyond the Sepik River immediately, and these forces were to be concentrated at Wewak as quickly as possible. Finally, a cadre of one division was immediately to be sent to Hollandia.[39]

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39 2d Area Army Opn-Order No. A-46, 20 Mar 44, as translated in ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 48, 5 Jul 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files; 18th Army Opns, III, 17 - 20; Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 30 - 46.

General Adachi received his new orders on 25 March, but his reaction was not exactly that probably expected by the 2d Area Army. The 8th Area Army had planned to continue operations east of Wewak, to make Madang the front line, and to build up strength to counterattack Allied forces mopping up on the Huon Peninsula.[40] Possibly General Adachi, upon his

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40 18th Army Opns, III, 4 - 8.

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transfer to the 2d Area Army, may have had some mistaken loyalty to his former commander and a feeling that the 8th Area Army plan was the better, although he finally recognized that the latter plan would be practically impossible of execution. At any rate, General Adachi s interpretation of

the 2d Area Army's definitively worded order was rather strange. He ordered the 41st Division to hold the Madang area by rear guard action until the end of April, but at the same time the bulk of the division was to be sent westward 100 miles along the coast to Hansa Bay. The 20th Division was to move initially to Hansa Bay. Upon its relief there by the 41st Division, the 20th was to proceed to But and, ultimately, to Aitape. The 51st Division was ordered to move from Hansa Bay to Wewak and, beginning in late July or early August, was to push on toward Hollandia. Instead of sending one division to Hollandia immediately and getting the rest of the 18th Army started on its way to that area as ordered by the 2d Area Army, General Adachi decided to concentrate all his forces at Wewak. One concession to the letter and spirit of the 2d Area Army's order was made: "... and, if conditions permit, strengthen the Hollandia sector also."[41]

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41 18th Army Opns, III, pp. 4 - 8, 9 - 11; 18th Army Opn-Order (no number), 25 Mar 44, as translated in ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 43, 31 May 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files. The quotation is from the 18th Army's translated order.

The Japanese apparently expected the Allies to launch a large-scale amphibious attack along the north coast of Australian New Guinea about the end of April 1944. However, the enemy placed the Hansa Bay area and Wewak, in that order, ahead of Hollandia as the probable targets for the expected assault. General Adachi apparently believed that the Allies were going to move on Hansa Bay and therefore evidently considered that he had ample time in which to reinforce Hollandia (although he did betray some slight concern about the Aitape area), but little time to strengthen Hansa Bay. His propensity for devoting most of his attention to Hansa Bay may also have resulted from some wishful thinking. While he had no great fear of Allied forces then patrolling in the area south and east of Madang, he did have some trouble disengaging his units from that region and the 18th Army had a great deal of difficulty crossing the broad swamps and wide washes at

the mouth of the Sepik River between Hansa Bay and Wewak. It would have been much simpler to hold at Hansa Bay.[42]

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42 18th Army Opns, III, 17 - 28, 39 - 40.

The 2d Area Army was not satisfied with the progress of the 18th Army's westward movement. Finally, on 12 April, General Anami sent his Chief of Staff, Lt. Gen. Takazo Numata, to Wewak from the 2d Area Army command post at Davao. Perhaps coincidentally with General Numata's arrival at Wewak the 80th Infantry of the 20th Division was ordered to prepare for movement to Aitape. The displacment of the 80th Infantry apparently started soon thereafter, but few men of that regiment reached Aitape by 22 April. General Numata flew back to Davao on 13 April, after he had instructed General Adachi to start troops moving to Hollandia as well as Aitape. On 18 April, just four days before D Day at Hollandia, the 66th Infantry of the 51st Division was ordered to strike out from Wewak for Hollandia, where the regiment was expected to arrive about mid-June. The 66th Infantry had not started its movement when for obvious reasons General Adachi, on 22 April, revoked his regiment's marching orders.[43]

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43 18th Army Opns, III, 17 - 20, 28 - 32, 40 - 41; Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 45 - 46; 20th Div Opn-Order (no number), 12 Apr 44, as translated in ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 49, 12 Jul 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files; ALAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 38, 26 Apr 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files.

There is absolutely no evidence that the Japanese had any prepared defense plans for Hollandia. It could hardly have been otherwise. If General Adachi had entertained misgivings about the command situation at Hollandia in January, by 22 April he may well have been experiencing sleepless nights over it. The Commanding General, 4th Air Army, previously

senior officer of all services at Hollandia, had left that base late in March. The Commanding General, 6th Air Division, who had arrived at Hollandia from Wewak in mid-March, had been relieved in disgrace after the loss of his planes early in April. His place was taken by Maj. Gen. Masazumi Inada, sent to Hollandia from his western New Guinea command, the 2d Field Base Unit, by the 2d Area Army, in mid-April. The 2d Field Base Unit was a headquarters concerned principally with logistics, and had initially been set up to provide support for 2d Army units in western New Guinea. Experience in such a unit was hardly conducive to understanding the problems of air force troops or ground defenses and, to complicate matters further, General Inada's previous service had been in artillery.

Admiral Endo, commander of the 9th Fleet and senior naval officer at Hollandia, had arrived at that base from Wewak only late in March. He had hardly had time to acquaint himself with the area and his subordinate naval commanders. Finally, the senior officer of all services at Hollandia was Maj. Gen. Toyoze Kitazono. He also was a supply officer. His former headquarters, that of the 3d Field Transportation Unit, had been dispatched overland from Wewak in March, and General Kitazono had arrived at Hollandia only ten days before the Allies landed there. He had no time to develop a defense plan for the area, let alone co-ordinate such a plan with General Inada and Admiral Endo.[44] In fact, there can be some doubt that General Kit-

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44 18th Army Opns, III, 41 - 46, 48 - 54; Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 48 - 51.

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azono was in a hurry about developing the needed defenses. He had served long and well with the 18th Army and probably brought with him to Hollandia at least some of General Adachi's belief that either Hansa Bay or Wewak would be the site of the next major Allied invasion.

Japanese Reactions to Hollandia

What happened to General Kitazono is uncertain, but apparently he had either left the Hollandia area or had been killed there before the Allied

landings. Whatever the actual situation was, 2d Area Army, on 22 April, ordered General Inada of the 6th Air Division to assume command at Hollandia. At 0930 that morning General Inada issued a grandiose plan of resistance. Japanese troops in the area were ordered to take up positions near the town of Hollandia and also to "... destroy the enemy expected from Tanahmerah Bay." Most of the troops he was able to organize, General Inada finally concentrated near Sabron on the Deprare - Lake Sentani road. There the U.S. 24th Infantry Division, advancing inland from Tanahmerah Bay, met the only significant organized resistance during the Hollandia operation.

But, despite General Inada's best efforts to bring order out of the chaos created by the surprise invasion, most of the Japanese troops in the Hollandia area fled ignominiously into the hills as the first shots were fired from Allied naval guns. Late in the afternoon of 22 April, General Inada, apparently a realist, practically gave up the fight. Faced with the rapid disintegration of his organizations, at least 90 percent of which were service units, he issued a new order which expressed a defeatist sentiment usually foreign to Japanese thought: "The division [6th Air Division] will be on guard against enemy landings and will attempt to withdraw at night." 45

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45 Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 48 - 51; 18th Army Opns, III, 48 - 54; 6th Air Div Opn-Orders Nos. 45 and 46, 22 Apr 44, as translated in 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 146 - 47. The quotations are from the translated operation orders.

West of Hollandia, the 2d Area Army and its subordinate command, the 2d Army, attempted to take some action to counter the Allied invasion. The 2d Army, feeling that Hollandia was too important a base to be meekly abandoned without some action, decided to dispatch eastward and overland the two regiments of the 36th Division which were stationed in the Wakde - Sarmi area. Acting on instructions from the 2d Area Army, which supported this plan, the 2d Army ordered two battalions of the 224th Infantry and a battalion of the 36th Division's field artillery to start toward Hollandia on 24 April. It was

expected that the rest of the division could start moving eastward from Sarmi about 10 May.

However, the Southern Army, which had just taken over control of the 2d Area Army, would not permit the Sarmi area to be denuded of troops, and on 25 April vetoed the plan to send the 36th Division to Hollandia. The 2d Area Army stubbornly argued the necessity for the recapture of Hollandia and further recommended that a large-scale amphibious operation for its re-occupation be mounted in western New Guinea in mid-June. The Southern Army was adamant and took pains to point out to the 2d Area Army that it would be impossible, because of lack of shipping and air support, to stage a large amphibious task force within the forseeable future. Finally, on 30 April, the Southern Army cancelled further preparations for a push to Hollandia by the 36th Division.

The best the 2d Area Army was able to obtain from its discussions with the Southern Army (and representatives had been flown to the senior headquarters to plead the 2d Area Army's case) was tacit approval to continue the movement toward Hollandia of such 36th Division elements as had already been dispatched eastward from Sarmi. These units, both infantry and artillery, had been placed under the control of Col. Soemon Matsuyama, commander of the 224th Infantry, and had been designated the Matsuyama Force. The last elements of the Matsuyama Force cleared the Sarmi area on 4 May. The point of the column had advanced to Armopa, a little over half-way from Sarmi to Hollandia, when, on 17 May, the Allies made a new landing near Sarmi. The 36th Division immediately ordered the Matsuyama Force to retrace its steps. Thus ended Japanese efforts to recapture Hollandia from the west.[46]

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46 Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 51 - 53; Hist of Southern Area Army, pp. 61 - 64; 224th Inf Opn-Orders (no numbers), 24 Apr and 17 May 44, as translated in AIAMO FORCE, G - 2 Wkly Rpt No. 48, 5 Jul 44, copy in G - 2 DofA files. More material on Matsuyama Force operations is set forth below in the chapters concerning action in the Wakde - Sarmi area.

Except for the one lucky bomb hit on Allied supplies stacked along White Beaches in Humboldt Bay, Japanese air reaction to the seizure of Hollandia was practically nonexistent, although on 22 April, the 4th Air Army was ordered to concentrate all its aircraft on western New Guinea fields to prepare for strong attacks against the Allied shipping and ground forces at Hollandia. The project was unsuccessful. The 4th Air Army did not have the necessary planes to stage major attacks; Allied naval aircraft kept away from Hollandia most of the planes the Japanese were able to send toward that objective; Allied air action prevented the Japanese from keeping their western New Guinea fields operational; and by the time the American carriers had to leave the area, land-based air support was available to the Allies either at or within range of Hollandia.

Japanese naval reaction by air, sea, or subsurface means, was equally insignificant. On 21 April, having heard of the departure of a large Allied convoy from the Admiralties, the Combined Fleet issued orders to the Central Pacific Fleet to attack the convoy with all available submarines. But difficulties arose in getting the submarines assembled for a concerted attack and, except for a few sightings off Hollandia, the subsurface vessels stayed away from the area. The Combined Fleet was itself preparing for a naval showdown in the Pacific, butthis battle was not scheduled until mid-summer. The Hollandia operation caught the Combined Fleet by surprise, and the Japanese Navy quickly decided that the time was not ripe to risk major fleet elements.[47]

Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 48 - 51; Naval Opns in Western New Guinea Area, pp. - .

Japanese Withdrawal from Hollandia

At Hollandia, General Inada decided to assemble his forces at Genjem, a village about fifteen miles west and slightly south of Lake Sentani. Near Genjem, which was situated on the main east - west inland trail of the Hollandia area, the Japanese had started some agricultural projects. By reason of its location and agriculture, the Genjem area was the logical

place for gathering forces retreating before the Allied advance. Most of the Japanese supplies at Hollandia had been stored around the shores of Humboldt Bay. With these lost, the Japanese could muster less than a week's supply of rations from inland stockpiles, but they might augment these rations from the projects at Genjem. The next phase of General Inada's withdrawal plan was an overland trek 120 miles to the Wakde - Sarmi area. From Genjem one trail led almost due west toward Sarmi, and another trail led north 16 miles to Demta, a bay village located on the east - west trail.

By 30 April some 7,000 Japanese troops had assembled in the vicinity of Genjem. Here they were organized, without maps and already short of rations and medical supplies, into nine or ten echelons for the long march westward through inhospitable country. The first echelon, consisting of stranded pilots and ground crews of the defunct 6th Air Division, had left Genjem on or about 26 April. The last organized group had departed the Genjem area by 9 May.[48]

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48 18th Army Opns, III, 41 - 46; Hist of 2d Area Army, pp. 51 - 53.

The Japanese troops who struck out from Genjem after 1 May either had to push overland through mainly untracked wilderness (the inland trail lost its identity not far west of Genjem and deteriorated into many unmapped and dead end jungle tracks) or run a gamut of Allied outposts. Companies I and K of the 19th Infantry, 24th Division, set up road blocks at Genjem and Demta during the first week of May. Company K sent numerous patrols over all trails in the vicinity of Genjem and combed neighboring native hamlets for Japanese stragglers. Company I patrolled south from Demta and along coastal trails leading both east and west of that village. By 6 June, the two companies had killed 405 Japanese and had taken sixty-four prisoners in the Genjem- Demta region. Many more Japanese were found dead of starvation or disease along the trails in the same area.[49]

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49 24th Div Opns Rpt Hollandia, pp. 98 - 110.

The agonies suffered by those Japanese killed in the Genjem - Demta sector were probably fewer than those of the troops who sought to make the trek to Sarmi. Remnants of the first group, which had left Genjem on 26 April, approached Sarmi just in time for the Allied invasion of that area on 17 May; the rest had to attempt to by-pass Sarmi too. For the most part, the Japanese retreating through Genjem died slowly en route to Sarmi from starvation, wounds, and disease. Of those who departed the Hollandia area via Genjem, the Japanese themselves estimated that only 7 percent survived to reach the Sarmi area.[50]

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50 18th Army Opns, III, 41 - 46, 48 - 54.

There could not have been many more than 1,000 survivors of the original Japanese Hollandia garrison. The following appear to be reasonable figures concerning operations at Hollandia from 22 April to 6 June 1944:

7,220	Japanese postwar estimate of the number of men gathered at Genjem for the overland trek to Sarmi;
3,332	Allied estimate of Japanese killed or found dead by Allied forces in the Hollandia area to 6 June;
611	Number of Japanese captured in the Hollandia area by Allied forces to 6 June;
11,163	Total number of Japanese troops accounted for by Allied and Japanese sources as of 6 June.

Allowing a generous error of overestimation for the first two figures, but also taking into account the number of Japanese killed or captured in the Hollandia area after 6 June and those later killed or captured during operations in western New Guinea, the losses of the original Japanese garrison at Hollandia remain at a staggering figure. Assuming that the Japanese estimate of 93 percent casualties for the troops who attempted the march to Sarmi is reasonably accurate, then it appears that only about 1,000 of the approximately 11,000 Japanese who were stationed at Hollandia on 22 April 1944 could have survived the war.

CHAPTER V

Prelude to the Battle of the Driniumer

While operations at Hollandia were rapidly drawing to a successful conclusion, another campaign was just beginning at Aitape, 125 miles to the east. The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE, with the 163d Infantry and regimental combat team attachments of the 41st Division as its combat nucleus, landed near Aitape on 22 April, D Day for Hollandia as well. The principal objective of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was the seizure and rehabilitation of the Japanese-constructed Tadji airstrips eight miles southeast of Aitape. These fields were to provide bases from which Allied aircraft could support ground operations at Hollandia after the Fifth Fleet's carriers left the latter area. The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was also to provide ground flank protection for Hollandia by preventing any westward advance on the part of the Japanese 18th Army, assembling some ninety miles east of Aitape at Wewak.

Securing the Airfield Area

The Capture of the Airfields

At 0500 on 22 April, the ships of Capt. Albert G. Noble's Eastern Attack Group, the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE aboard, arrived in the transport area, about eight miles southeast of Aitape.[1] The assault troops of the

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1 Information in this section is taken principally from: CTG 77.3 (Eastern Attack Group) Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. 4 - 5; CTF 77 (Attack Force) Opns Rpt Tanahmerah Bay - Humboldt Bay - Aitape, p. 31; 163d Inf Jnl, Aitape; 163d Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. - ; PTF G - 3 Jnl, 22 Apr - 4 May 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 May 44, pp -.

163d Infantry, Col. Francis W. Mason commanding, immediately began loading into Landing Craft, Personnel, Ramp (LCPR's) from the destroyer transports which had brought them from their eastern New Guinea staging area. At 0600, forty-five minutes before H Hour, the fire support ships of the Eastern Attack

Group began to bombard beach targets and offshore islands. This fire continued for thirty minutes, and was followed by a bombing attack on Blue Beach and its flanks by supporting aircraft from escort carriers lying offshore. Then came strafing runs over Blue Beach, lasting until 0640, H minus 5 minutes, when the LCPR's were approximately 1,200 yards from shore. Now, two rocket-equipped submarine chasers, stationed on either flank of the leading boat wave, sent their rockets flying onto the beach. The first wave of LCPR's hit the shore on schedule at 0645.

Blue Beach was 1,200 yards wide, its center at a small native village called Korako, whence a trail negotiable by motor vehicles ran inland through jungle and coconut groves to the Tadji airstrips. D Day had dawned dull and overcast, making visibility poor in the landing area. Heavy smoke from fires set in Japanese supply dumps by preassault bombardments further obscured the coast line. With no landmarks to guide them, the coxswains of the leading boat wave missed the proper beach. The landing did not take place at Karako, but at Wapil, another small coastal village about 1,200 yards to the east. This accident soon proved to be a happy one, for it was discovered that the Wapil area was much better suited to the beaching of Landing Ships, Tank (LST's) and large landing craft than any other in the Aitape region.

The change in beaches created little difficulty for the assault troops of the 163d Infantry. The Wapil area had been adequately covered by naval and air bombardment and the landings were made without opposition. Tactical surprise was as complete as that achieved the same day by the RECKLESS TASK FORCE at Hollandia. Leaving their breakfast cooking and their bunks unmade, the Japanese at Aitape had fled in panic when the naval support fire began.

The 2d and 3d Battalions of the 163d Infantry landed abreast, with the 2d on the right (west). The 2d Battalion immediately swung northwest, finding Karako and the trail leading to the Tadji strips without difficulty. As soon as the trail entrance was secured, the two battalions expanded the beachhead to a depth of 500 yards and westward 2,500 yards from Wapil to the mouth of Waitanan Creek. This area, which was occupied by 1000, marked the limits of the task force's First Phase Line of advance. So far, opposition had

CHART NO. 7

The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE

(22 April - 25 August 1944)

22 April

-

4 May

HQ. PERSECUTION TASK FORCE
GEN. DOE

163D RCT
GEN. DOE

127TH RCT
COL. HOWE

consisted of only a few rifle shots. Three Japanese prisoners had been taken and over fifty Javanese laborers had willingly given themselves up. The assault units now awaited the landing of the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry, and for an order from task headquarters to attack toward the Tadji strips.

The 1st Battalion followed the other two ashore without incident and was assembled by 1030. About half an hour later it passed through the 3d Battalion's lines and started moving toward Tadji Bomber Strip. Simultaneously, the 2d Battalion began advancing toward Tadji Fighter Strip while the 3d Battalion remained at Blue Beach to guard against Japanese counterattacks.

Only necessary caution delayed the advance inland, and by 1245 the 2d Battalion had cleared its objective. During the afternoon two companies were sent across Waitanan Creek and along the beach to Pro and Pro Mission. These two settlements were clear of enemy troops, and the battalion command post was moved to Pro for the night. The remainder of the unit deployed along trails leading inland from Pro to Tadji Fighter Strip. The 1st Battalion settled for the night at the west end of Tadji Bomber Strip, which had been secured against no opposition. The 3d Battalion sent patrols east along the coast from Wapil to Nor, Rilia, Lemieng, and the mouth of the Nigia River, three miles from Wapil. No enemy activity was noted. At the Nigia a reinforced platoon set up an outpost and the rest of the battalion spread out along the eastern edges of the captured airstrips.

By dark on D Day the principal objectives of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE had been secured. Work could soon be started on the airfields, which were needed to insure land-based air support for both the Aitape and Hollandia beachheads. The strips had been secured at an amazingly low cost — two men of the 163d Infantry had been killed and thirteen wounded.

Airfield Construction and Supporting Arms

No. 62 Works Wing of the Royal Australian Air Force had come ashore at Blue Beach during the morning, and was able to begin rehabilitation of Tadji Fighter Strip at 1300. This work continued throughout the night under floodlights, the lack of Japanese opposition and the urgency of the task having prompted the task force commander to push the repairs. Although it had been hoped that the fighter strip would be ready for use on D plus 1, terrain conditions were such that the necessary construction was not completed on

schedule. It was 0900 on 24 April before the Australian engineers, who had worked without break for almost forty-eight hours, could announce that the airstrip was ready. During the morning of the 24th, two P - 38's and three C - 47's used the field. At 1630 twenty-five P - 40's of No. 78 Wing, Royal Australian Air Force, landed and remained for future operations. The balance of the wing arrived the next day.[2]

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2 Ltr, F/Lt A. L. Davies (RAAF), Officer-in-Charge, War History Section, Hq RAAF, to author, 8 Mar 48, in OCMH files.

The ground on which the fighter strip was located was so ill-drained that it was not until 28 April, after steel matting had been placed on the field, that it could be used continually. On that date it became a 4,000-foot all-weather strip, 100 feet wide.[3] No. 62 Works Wing then moved to

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3 PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 May 44, pp. - ; PTF Engr Rpt, Part IV, p. 2, copy in files of OCE GHQ AFPAC. The fighter strip was used until 12 July, on which day it was declared unserviceable and was converted to an emergency field. Proper drainage could never be obtained at the site. However, by 12 July the strip had well-served the purpose for which it had been constructed — rapid provision of land-based air support for the Hollandia and Aitape operations.

Tadji Bomber Strip to aid the 872d and 875th Engineer Aviation Battalions (AB). The latter two units passed to the operational control of Wing Commander William A. C. Dale (RAAF), who was PERSECUTION TASK FORCE Engineer and also the commanding officer of No. 62 Works Wing. Rehabilitation of the bomber strip was a more ardous task and the field was not ready for the use of fighters and transport planes until 27 May and for bombers not until early in July.[4]

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4 AIAMD FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, p. 50; PTF Engr Rpt, Part VI, pp. 2 - 3; ltr, F/Lt Davies to author, 8 Mar 48.

Other engineer units ashore on D Day directed their energies to unloading ships, constructing roads and bridges, and clearing dump and bivouac areas. By 1930, the 593d Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment, working with the Naval Beach Party, unloaded all the LST's which had arrived at Blue Beach on D Day. The next day the same men unloaded one AKA and seven more LST's. Unloading of the two AK'S did not proceed as rapidly as planned, for neither ship had been properly combat-loaded. One, which had arrived on D Day, was only 65 percent unloaded when, during the night of 27 - 28 April, it was hit by a bomb dropped from a lone Japanese plane which flew in from an unknown base in western New Guinea. The other AK, undamaged, towed the first back to Finschhafen, after which it returned to Blue Beach to complete its own unloading. No other untoward incident marred the debarkation of troops and supplies.5

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5 CTG 77.3 Opns Rpt Aitape, p. 7, PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 May 44, p. 3.

The 27th Engineers constructed roads inland from Blue Beach to the airstrips, while Company A, 116th Engineers, worked on coastal roads. Light Japanese culverts and bridges in the area either collapsed under the weight of American and Australian heavy equipment or had been damaged by pre-assault bombardment and rapid repair of these bridges and culverts was a pressing problem for the engineers. Across Waitanan Creek, No. 7 Mobile Works Squadron, Royal Australian Air Force, constructed the first bridge to be erected by Allied forces in the area. Pending completion of other bridges along the coastal road from Blue Beach to Aitape, the 27th Engineers maintained ferry services across the main steams, while Company A, 116th Engineers, bridged the Nigia River on the east flank. On 2 May, heavy rains created flood conditions along all streams in the area, damaging ferry stages and wiping out most of the bridge construction already accomplished and by 4 May many important bridges were still to be reconstructed. Continued heavy rains during the ensuing month made road maintenance so difficult that the Australian and American engineers working on the airstrips and bridges had

to devote much of their time to road repairs.[6]

6 AIAMD FORCE Opns Rpt Hollandia - Aitape, p. 50; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 May 44; PTF Engr Rpt, Part IV, pp. 2 - 3.

Artillery had been brought ashore on D Day without difficulty. The 167th Field Artillery, supporting the 163d Infantry, was in position and its guns registered on check points by H plus 4 hours. The battalion did not fire any support missions while it was stationed in the Aitape area. On D plus 1, Headquarters, 190th Field Artillery Group assumed command of the field artillery units in the area. The 126th Field Artillery of the 32d Division arrived the same day. Anti-aircraft artillery came ashore rapidly on D Day and set up positions along Blue Beach and around Tadji Fighter Strip.[7]

7 PTF G - 3 Jnl, 22 Apr - 4 May 44; 167th FA Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. - .

Securing the West Flank

While engineers continued work on the fighter strip through the night of 22 - 23 April, other elements of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE made preparations to resume the advance.[8] About 0800 on the 23d, the 1st Battalion, 163d Infantry,

8 Unless otherwise indicated, material in this section is from: 163d Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. - ; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 May 44, pp. - ; 163d Inf Jnl, Aitape; PTF G - 3 Jnl, 22 Apr - 4 May 44.

started westward to the Raihu River. The only obstacle to rapid progress was Waitanan Creek, where a Japanese-built bridge collapsed under the weight of a tank of the 603d Tank Company, supporting the advance. However, enough of the bridge remained intact to allow the infantry to cross the creek without difficulty and within an hour the battalion had secured incomplete Tadji West Strip and had begun moving into the coconut tree groves of Tadji Plantation, 2,500 yards west of the morning line of departure. No opposition had been encountered.

The 2d Battalion had begun moving westward about 0845, following the coastal track. The unit paused just west of Vokau while a trail leading southwest from that village was reconnoitered as a possible means of contact with the 1st Battalion, now 1,500 yards inland. Without delaying the advance to make this contact, the battalion pushed forward and by noon Company E reached the mouth of the Raihu River, six miles northwest of Blue Beach. At dusk patrols were ferried across the river and moved on to Tumleo, which was reported clear of Japanese troops. The battalion bivouacked for the night on the east bank of the Raihu.

Because of radio communication difficulties, what progress the 1st Battalion had made beyond Tadji Plantation was not known at regimental headquarters until early in the afternoon. However, the unit had encountered no enemy resistance and by 1400 had reached the east bank of the Raihu. Patrols were sent across the stream before dark, but, like the 2d Battalion, the 1st set up a night perimeter on the east bank. This position was about 4,000 yards upstream. The 3d Battalion was relieved on the east flank by the 127th Infantry, 32d Division, which came ashore at Blue Beach during the morning of D plus 1. The 3d Battalion, together with the regimental headquarters, then moved forward to Tadji Plantation. Night defenses were set up about 1,200 yards east of the Raihu and about 2,000 yards inland. So light had Japanese opposition been during the day that the 163d Infantry had suffered but two casualties -- one man wounded and another missing.

The next day, 24 April, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 163d Infantry, resumed westward movement at 0730. The 1st Battalion crossed the Raihu and advanced northwest over an ill-defined track through swampy terrain to St. Anna Plantation and St. Anna Mission, both of which were secured by 0900. The few Japanese observed by the battalion fled rapidly toward the coast and Aitape, against which town the 2d Battalion was moving along the coastal road. The latter unit encountered no opposition and, about 0930, established contact with the 1st Battalion at the mouth of St. Anna Creek, about 1,800 yards west of the Raihu. The regimental commander now placed the 1st Battalion in reserve and ordered the unit to comb the many trails radiating south and west from St.

Anna Mission for signs of enemy activity. The 3d Battalion was ordered to pass through the 1st and continue the advance westward.

While these changes in dispositions were being made, the 2d Battalion pushed on along the coast to Aitape. The unit reached the town about 1030, finding that the Japanese had evacuated it. In half an hour Aitape and the nearby dominating height at Rohm Point were secured. The battalion, after dispatching patrols 3½ miles west along the coast to Tepier, set up defenses in a semicircle around Aitape. The unit had met no enemy opposition, and was preparing to move on when, early in the afternoon, its advance was halted by regimental order. The 3d Battalion was ready by noon to continue westward beyond St. Anna Plantation, but the regimental commander suddenly ordered both it and the 1st Battalion to retire to the east bank of the Raihu to Tadji plantation to establish night defenses. It is not clear why this withdrawal was ordered. Japanese opposition had been almost nonexistent and the 163d Infantry had lost only one man killed during the day.

Brig. Gen. Jens A. Doe, the commander of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE, was by now dissatisfied with the pace of the westward advance, and he therefore suggested to ALAMO FORCE that the regimental commander be relieved. This step was approved by General Krueger, but the regimental commander was retained in command of his unit until 9 May, only two days before the 163d Infantry was relieved from combat in the Aitape area.[9]

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9 The circumstances surrounding the relief of the regimental commander are outlined in: rad, PTF to AIAMO, AE-75, 24 Apr 44, in AIAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 25 - 26 Apr 44; rad, AIAMO to RTF (I Corps), WF - 4652, 29 Apr 44, in AIAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 29 - 30 Apr 44.

For the next few days there were no major changes in the dispositions of the 163d Infantry. Patrolling inland and along the coast west of Aitape continued and on 30 April Company A, reinforced by elements of Companies B and C, resumed more active operations when it moved about ten miles inland southwest of Aitape to the village of Aiterap. There the Aiterap Force

(as this outpost was designated) set up a base and dispatched patrols to neighboring villages lying along inland trails used by Japanese stragglers attempting to escape westward from the Aitape area. The Aiterap Force remained in position, cutting off such enemy stragglers — killing a few and capturing others — until relieved by elements of the 32d Division early in May.

The 2d Battalion, on 28 April, dispatched part of Company G to the Malol Villages on the coast twelve miles west of Aitape to recruit native laborers for work on the Tadji airstrips. On 1 May the rest of the company moved to Serra, a coastal village thirty-one miles northwest of Aitape. The company picked up the Malol group, the mission of which had met with little success, on the way to Serra. The Serra Force combed the area near its village base and up the Bliri River, finding few signs of Japanese movements. The Serra Force was also relieved by elements of the 32d Division early in May.

The 3d Battalion combed the environs of Tadji Plantation and sent patrols up the east bank of the Raihu to the Kapoam Villages, twelve miles south of the coast. At one of these villages — Marnge — a platoon of Company K established a trail block. At Kamti, another village of the same group, a reinforced platoon of Company L, the Kamti Force, set up a patrol base. Early on the morning of 28 April the Kamti Force was surrounded by about 200 Japanese and the enemy launched three determined assaults against the outpost during the course of the day. These attacks cost the Japanese forty-two killed, while the Kamti Force lost but two men killed and two wounded. The remainder of Company L, reinforced by other 3d Battalion troops, was sent south to relieve the outpost, and ammunition and rations were dropped from the air to the beleagurered group, which beat back more enemy attacks on the 29th. At evening on the latter day, Company L arrived at Kamti, bringing the strength of the force there to about 270 men, against whom the Japanese launched two more attacks during the following night. As a result of the action of the 29th and through the next night, about fifty more Japanese were killed at the cost to the Kamti Force of one man killed.

Those enemy who had not engaged in the fighting during the night of 29 - 30

April had been observed reconnoitering the perimeter and early the next morning friendly natives reported that the Japanese were massing for another attack. The Kamti Force commander thereupon decided that his position was no longer tenable, and withdrew his men to Company K's perimeter at Marnge, two miles to the north. Battery A, 126th Field Artillery, then fired 240 rounds of 105-mm. ammunition on suspected Japanese assembly points in the Kamti area. At 0800 the next morning Company L began moving back to Kamti, where it arrived without incident three hours later. There were few further contacts with the Japanese in the area until early May, when Company L was relieved by troops of the 32d Division.

East Flank Operations

The 127th Regimental Combat Team (less the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, and Companies F and G of the same regiment) had unloaded at Blue Beach on 23 April.[10] About 0700 the same morning, following an air and naval bombardment,

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10 Information in this section is based principally on: 127th Inf Jnl, 23 Apr - 4 May 44: PTF G - 3 Jnl, 22 Apr - 4 May 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 May 44, pp. - .

Companies F and G landed on Seleo and Tumleo Islands off Blue Beach and secured them against minor opposition by 1400. On 25 April Company G occupied the third large offshore island, Ali, without difficulty. The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, arrived at Blue Beach on 26 April and established its headquarters near Korako. The 2d Battalion set up its base at Rilia on 23 April and relieved the 3d Battalion, 163d Infantry, of responsibility on the east flank of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE. The 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, established a defense line along the southern and eastern edges of Tadji Bomber and Fighter Strips.

Patrols of the 2d Battalion moved from Rilia east along the coastal track to the mouth of the Driniumor, eleven miles distant; up the east bank of the Nigia River five miles to Chinapelli; and up the west bank of the Driniumor about six miles to Afua. From Afua a trail was found running westward through dense jungle to Chinapelli via a village called Palauru. From Chinapelli one

track ran north to the mouth of the Nigia and others wandered off in a westerly direction toward Kamti. From the Driniumor two main trails were found leading eastward — one the principal coastal track to Wewak and the other a rough inland trace originating at Afua.

The latter trail paralleled the coast line and ran along the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains. North of the trail was a flat coastal plain, generally forested with dense jungle growth and containing numerous swampy areas and a miltitude of small and large streams. The plain narrowed gradually from a depth of about ten miles at the Nigia River to less than a mile at the Danmap River, flowing into the Pacific about forty-five miles southeast of Aitape. Beyond the Danmap, toward Wewak, was more rolling terrain where hills descended from the Torricelli Mountains down to the sea. The trail east from Afua crossed the many rivers between the Driniumor and the Danmap at points three to five miles south of the coast.

It was essential to the security of the newly-won Tadji strips that any Japanese movements westward from Wewak along both the inland and coastal trails be discovered and watched. Therefore, it was decided to send Company C, 127th Infantry, reinforced by part of Company D, by boat to Nyaparake, a coastal village about seventeen miles east of the Nigia River. There the reinforced company was to set up a patrol base and report and delay Japanese movements in the vicinity.

On 28 April the unit boarded small boasts at Blue Beach and sailed eastward along the coast. Because the coast line was generally featureless, the landing actually took place near the mouth of the Dandriwad River, about eight miles east of Nyaparake. This error was quickly discovered but the force remained at its position for three days, patrolling near the mouth of the Dandirwad. Few signs of enemy activity were observed and the five Japanese killed in the area appeared to be stragglers rather than representatives of any organized unit of the 18th Army. On 1 May the unit moved by water back to Nyaparake. Outposts were immediately established three miles inland at Charov and Jalup, where the principal inland trail crossed the Drindaria River, and patrols were sent to the east and west over the inland trail and in both

directions from Nyaparake along the coastal track. The Nyaparake Force noticed no signs of organized enemy activity in the areas patrolled during the next few days.

Meanwhile, patrols of the 2d Battalion had moved along the coast from Rilia to the village of Yakamul, four miles west of Nyaparake; up the Driniumor River to Afua; from Afua to Chinapelli and Palauru; and along both banks of the Nigia River. Units of the 1st Battalion maintained a patrol base at Afua for four days, and 3d Battalion patrols scouted trails from Chinapelli to the Tadji strips and the Kapoam Villages. No signs of organized enemy movements were discovered, and only weary Japanese stragglers attempting to make their way inland and westward were encountered. This complete lack of organized Japanese operations in the area patrolled by the 127th Infantry to 4 May, together with the surprisingly easy seizure of the Tadji strips by the 163d Infantry, contradicted preassault estimates of the enemy situation in the Aitape area.

The Enemy Situation to 4 May

Prior to 22 April, the Allies had estimated that 3,500 Japanese, including 1,500 combat troops of the 20th Division, were based on Aitape. A final accounting shows that not more than 1,000 Japanese of all arms and services were actually in the Aitape area on D Day.[11] These troops consisted

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11 Rad ALAMD to GHQ, WF - 3714, 22 Apr 44, in ALAMD G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 21 - 22 Apr 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 Estimate of the Enemy Situation, PERSECUTION, 24 Jan 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnl, 26 Jan 44; PTF G - 2 Jnl, 22 Apr - 4 May 44; GHQ SWPA, G - 2 DSEI's Nos. 710 - 61, 1 Mar - 22 Apr 44, in G - 3 GHQ Jnls, 1 Mar - 22 Apr 44.

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principally of antiaircraft artillerymen and service personnel who had fled inland when Allied landing operations began and no organized resistance was encountered except for the skirmishes at Kamti. The only evidence of centralized command in the area was a captured report, dated 25 April, from the Commander, Aitape Garrison Unit, to the 18th Army. The document told of the

Allied landings, described operations to 25 April, set the strength of the Aitape Garrison Unit at 240 troops, and outlined a grandiose plan of attack, which probably culminated in the action around Kamti. Uknown to the Allies at the time, there had been a small scouting party of the 20th Division at Aitape on D Day, but after the Allied landings this group withdrew eastward to rejoin the main body of the 18th Army. Other Japanese survivors in the Aitape area tried to make their way westward to Vanimo, a minor enemy barge hideout on the coast between Aitape and Hollandia.[12]

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12 PTF G - 2 Jnl, 22 Apr - 4 May 44; rad; PTF to ALAMD, AE - 220, 29 Apr 44, in ALAMD G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 29 - 30 Apr 44; 18th Army Opns, III, - .

Between 22 April and 4 May, Japanese casualties in the Aitape area were estimated at 525 killed and during the same period, 25 enemy were captured. Allied losses were 19 killed and 40 wounded. All the Allied casualties were American and with but two or three exceptions, all were suffered by the 163d Infantry.[13]

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13 PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 22 Apr - 4 May 44, p. 6; PTF G - 1 and G - 2 Jnls, 22 Apr - 4 May 44.

There were a few signs that the 18th Army might be initiating a movement westward from Wewak toward Aitape, for interrogations of natives and aerial reconnaissance produced indications of organized enemy activity on the east flank of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE. The Japanese were reported to be bridging the Anumb River, about fifteen miles east of the Danmap. Motor vehicles or their tracks were observed along the beach and on the coastal trail from Wewak west to the Anumb, and aerial observers or Allied ground patrols found that enemy parties were reconnoitering the coastal track from the Danmap River west to the mouth of the Dandriwad. Natives reported that organized Japanese groups were bivouacking at various coastal villages between the Dandriwad and Danmap.

Intelligence officers of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE and ALAMO FORCE interpreted these activities as indicating that an organized westward movement by 18th Army units was underway. Whether or not this movement presaged an attack on the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was not yet clear, but it seemed certain that Allied troops on the east flank might soon meet strong Japanese units.[14]

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14 Rads, PTF to AIAMO, KL - 748 and AE - 373, 3 May 44; rad, PTF to AIAMO, AE - 406, 4 May 44; rad, AIAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF - 617, 4 May 44, all in AIAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 4 - 5 May 44.

Contact with the 18th Army on the East Flank

While the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was accomplishing its primary mission — seizure and repair of the Tadji strips — final plans were being made at higher headquarters for another operation in the Wakde - Sarmi area of Dutch New Guinea, 250 miles northwest of Aitape. The 163d Regimental Combat Team and General Doe with most of his staff were to participate in the new advance, which was scheduled for mid-May. General Krueger of ALAMO FORCE therefore directed that the 163d Infantry and its regimental combat team attachments be relieved of combat in the Aitape area and concentrated at Blue Beach by 6 May, ready to load for Wakde - Sarmi.[15]

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15 AIAMO FORCE FO No. 15, 29 Apr 44, in AIAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 29 - 30 Apr 44; rad, PTF to AIAMO, R - 103, 4 May 44, in AIAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 6 - 7 May 44.

Reorganization of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE

The 32d Infantry Division, less two regiments, was to move from Saidor in eastern New Guinea to Aitape to relieve the 163d Regimental Combat Team. The 127th Regimental Combat Team of the 32d Division had already arrived at Aitape. Initially, the 128th Infantry was to remain at Saidor as part of AIAMO FORCE Reserve for Wakde - Sarmi. The remainder of the 32d Division, consisting of the 126th Infantry, its regimental combat team attachments,

and division troops arrived at Blue Beach on 4 May. Maj. Gen. William H. Gill, the division commander, immediately assumed command of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE and two days later his division staff, after becoming acquainted with the situation in the Aitape area, began operations as Headquarters, PERSECUTION TASK FORCE.[16]

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16 ALAMO FORCE FO No. 15, 29 Apr 44; 32d Div FO No. 1, 30 Apr 44, PTF FO No. 2, 6 May 44, both latter docs in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 3 May 44.

Just before the Wakde - Sarmi operation began, it was decided to move the 128th Infantry from Saidor to Aitape so that the unit would be closer to its potential objective area in case of need. Noncombatant ships being available, the 128th Infantry (less the 3d Battalion) was shipped to Blue Beach, where it arrived on 15 May. The rest of the regiment, together with rear echelons of other 32d Division units, arrived at Aitape later in the month. Early in June the 128th Infantry was released from its ALAMO FORCE Reserve role for Wakde - Sarmi and reverted to the control of the 32d Division and the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE.[17]

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17 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 840, 17 May 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 16 - 18 May 44; rad, ALAMO Adv Hq to PTF, WH - 271, 8 Jun 44, in ALAMO Adv Hq G - 3 Jnl Wakde - Biak, 7 - 8 Jun 44.

As soon as General Gill assumed command of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE, defenses in the Aitape area were reorganized and zones of responsibility were assigned to the 126th and 127th Regimental Combat Teams. The dividing line between the two extended along Waitanan Creek south through the airdrome area and then southeastward. The area west of the line was assigned to the 126th Infantry and was designated the West Sector, while the 127th Infantry was to operate in the East Sector.

A series of defensive lines in front of a Main Line of Resistance, which enclosed the airstrips, covered the approaches to the vital fields. Positions

on the Main Line of Resistance were to be constructed rapidly, but were to be occupied only on orders from task force headquarters. Beyond the Main Line of Resistance there were set up a Local Security Line, an Outpost Line of Resistance, and an Outpost Security Patrol Line. The latter, lying about ten miles inland, to mark the general limits of patrolling. Finally, an isolated outpost was to be maintained by the 126th Infantry at Serra, where elements of the 163d Infantry had previously set up a patrol base. The 126th Infantry was to be supported by the 120th Field Artillery (105-mm. howitzers), while the same caliber weapons of the 126th Field Artillery were to support the 127th Infantry.[18]

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18 PTF FO No. 2, 6 May 44, in ALAMO G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 3 May 44.

The 126th Infantry completed relief of the 163d Infantry's outposts and patrol bases on the west flank by 8 May. Thereafter, the outpost troops were rotated from time to time, and the base at Serra was closed on the 28th, Japanese activity in that area having ceased. The next day, because the strength of Japanese forces in the East Sector's area was increasing, the 1st and 2d Battalions, 126th Infantry, were transferred to the East Sector, and responsibility for patrolling and defending the West Sector, which had been extended about mid-May to the eastern edge of Tadji Fighter Strip, passed to the 3d Battalion, 126th Infantry. Patrolling by all elements of the 126th Infantry in the West Sector accounted for a few Japanese killed, found dead along inland trails, or captured.[19]

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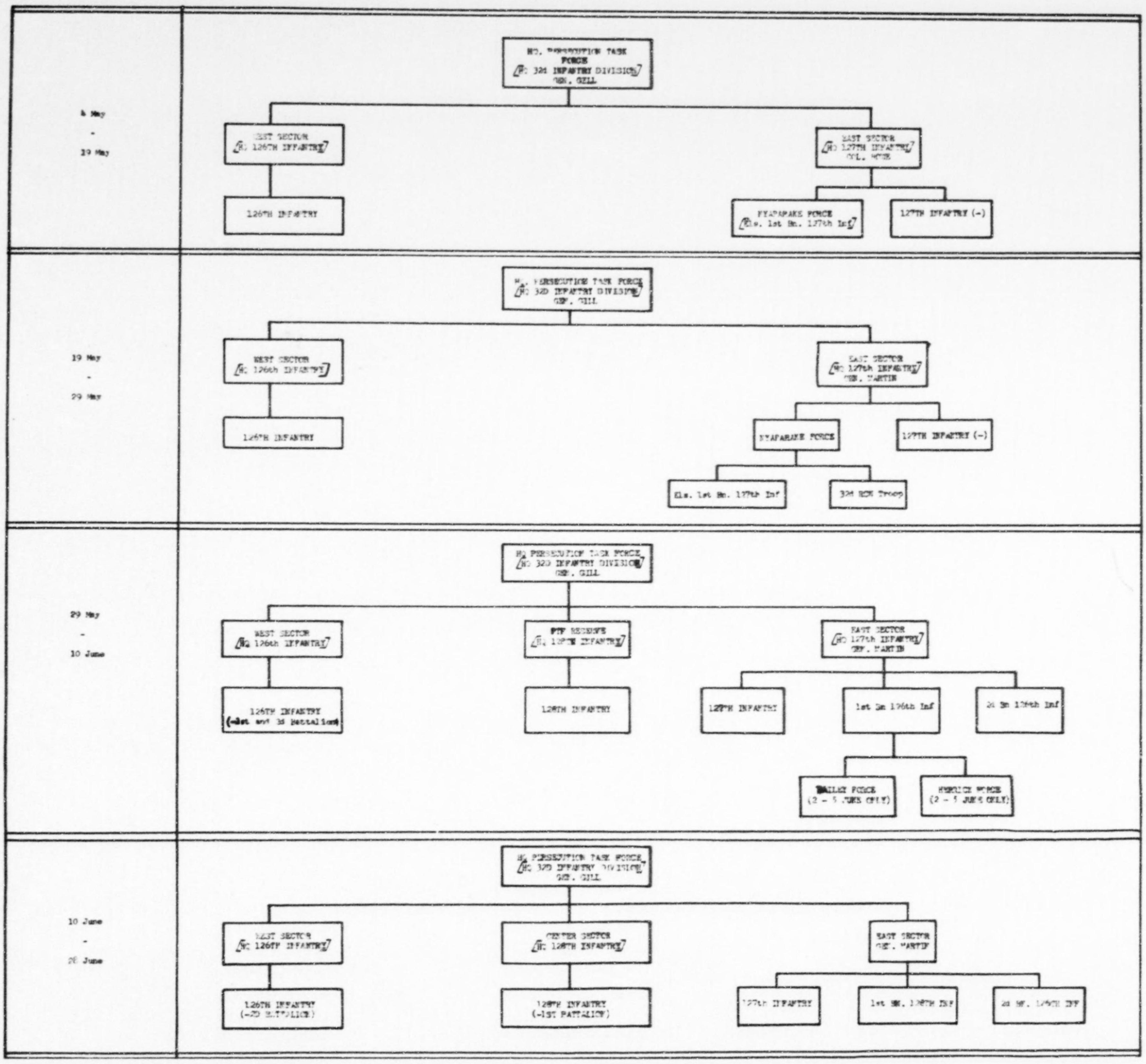
19 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 27 Jun 44; 1st Bn 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 27 Jun 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 June 44, pp. -- .

On 10 June, boundaries between various elements of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE were again changed and redispositions were effected. A new defensive area, designated the Center Sector, was established between the West and East Sectors to cover the ground between the eastern edge of the Tadji airdromes to a line running southwestward inland from Pro. The new sector became the

CHART NO. 7a

The PERSECUTION TASK FORCE

(22 April - 25 August 1944)



responsibility of the 128th Infantry, while the 126th Infantry's commander retained control in the West Sector and the 127th Infantry continued operations in the East Sector. At the same time, the Main Line of Resistance was drawn in toward the airfields from its previous eastern extension along the Nigia River and the earlier inland defensive lines were either abolished or withdrawn. Troops of the West and Center Sectors continued patrolling in the areas for which they were responsible. Only a few enemy stragglers were encountered, and no signs of organized Japanese activity were discovered in those sectors.[20]

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20 PTF FO No. 4, 10 Jun 44, attchd to PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44; 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 27 Jun 44; 128th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 27 Jun 44.

East Sector Troops Meet the Enemy

Col. Merle H. Howe, commanding officer of the 127th Infantry, was assigned to the command of the East Sector on 6 May. His missions were to maintain contact with the enemy on the eastern flank, to discover enemy intentions, and to delay any westward movement on the part of elements of the 18th Army. He was ordered to maintain outposts and patrol bases at Anamo and Nyaparake on the coast east of Aitape, and at Chinapelli and Afua inland. When he took over his new command, Colonel Howe had little information concerning the Japanese on the east flank beyond the fact that elements of two of the 18th Army's three divisisons had been identified east of the Nigia River. Troops of the 20th Division had been discovered building defensive positions on the east bank of the Danmap River and elements of the 41st Division were thought to be in the same general area. Finally, air observers had discovered concentrations of Japanese troops at coastal villages between the Danmap and Wewak. There seemed to be definite indications that large elements of the 18th Army were beginning to move westward from Wewak.[21]

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21 PTF FO No. 2, 6 May 44, and G - 2 Annex thereto, in AIAMD G - 3 Jnl Hollandia, 2 - 3 May 44; 127th Inf Jnl File, 4 - 15 May 44.

Colonel Howe subdivided his East Sector into battalion areas. The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, was to maintain a reinforced rifle company at Nyaparake and an outpost at Babiang, to the east near the mouth of the Dandriwad River. The battalion was to patrol up the Dandriwad and along the coast east to the Danmap River, while the 2d Battalion was made responsible for the inland area at Chinapelli, Palauru, and Afua. The 3d Battalion was to maintain permanent outposts at Anamo near the mouth of the Driniumor River and at Afua, six miles up that stream. Some of these dispositions were already effected on 6 May. The Nyaparake Force was on station and 2d Battalion units were operating in the Palauru area. The other dispositions were completed by 14 May.[22]

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22 127th Inf Jnl File, 4 - 15 May 44.

The Nyaparake Force, comprising Company C and elements of Company D, and now commanded by Capt. Tally D. Fulmer, the commanding officer of Company C, started patrolling to the east and inland on 7 May.[23] On that

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23 Information in the remainder of this section is based principally upon: 127th Inf Jnl Files, 5 - 15 and 15 - 31 May 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 June 44, pp. - ; PTF G - 3 Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - .

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day, patrols pushed across the mouth of the Dandriwad River to Babiang and Marubian. After clashing with a well-organized Japanese patrol, the Nyaparake Force elements withdrew to the west bank of the Dandriwad, and spent the next day patrolling up that river and questioning natives concerning enemy movements. On the 8th, a rifle platoon and a light machine gun section from Company A arrived to strengthen the Nyaparake Force.

The advance eastward was resumed the next day along two routes of advance beyond Babiang. One was the coastal trail and the other the "Old German Road,"

a name presumably referring to the days of German occupation of this part of New Guinea prior to the first World War. The Old German Road paralleled the coastal track at a distance of about 300 yards inland. Supported by Seventh Fleet motor torpedo boats (PT's), based at Aitape, Nyaparake Force patrols advanced almost 5,000 yards east of the Dandriwad during the day, encountering light resistance along both the Old German Road and the coastal track. At dusk, all forward units retired to Babiang, and Captain Fulmer re-examined his situation in the light of information obtained during the day. Large enemy groups had been reported to the west of Nyaparake at Yakamul and even as far distant as the Driniumor River, over halfway back to the Tadji perimeter. To the east, Japanese oppostion gave every indication of increasing. Finally, it appeared that the Nyaparake Force was being outflanked to the south. It had been reported that enemy parties were moving along the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains immediately south of the main inland east - west trail, which crossed the Dandriwad and Drindaria Rivers about five miles upstream.

Captain Fulmer decided to strengthen an outpost already on station at Charov, far up the Drindaria River, in order to keep closer watch on the enemy reported south of that village. At the same time, he requested that aircraft strafe the coastal trail and the Old German Road east of Babiang before any further attempt to advance eastward was made. Colonel Howe agreed to request the air support mission, and he ordered the Nyaparake Force to continue pushing eastward after the air strike was completed.

Eight P - 40's of No. 78 Wing, Royal Australian Air Force, bombed and strafed the two roads east of Babiang at 1130 on 10 May. Marubian, thought to be a Japanese assembly point, was also attacked. Following the air strikes, Captain Fulmer pushed the 1st Platoon, Company C, through Babiang while the 3d Platoon moved on to take Marubian without opposition. A defensive perimeter was set up around Marubian and an ambush was established on the Old German Road south of that village. No contacts were made with the enemy during the day by any elements of the Nyaparake Force. The advance continued on the 11th and the two forward platoons had reached a point about two miles beyond Marubian by early afternoon when halted by Japanese machine guns and small arms fire.

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The 3d Platoon, on the coastal trail, pulled back about 600 yards from the point of contact and watched a party of about fifty-five well-equipped Japanese proceed southwestward off the trail and disappear inland. The 3d Platoon dug in for the night on the beach, while the 1st Platoon, on the Old German Road, returned to Marubian.

Captain Fulmer decided to move the rest of Company C, 127th Infantry, to Marubian on 12 May. Since this would practically denude the base at Nyaparake of combat troops, the Charov outpost was ordered to return to the base village. These redispositions were accomplished during the morning of the 12th, and the advance eastward beyond Marubian was resumed about 1300 the same day.

The 3d Platoon of Company C, in the lead, soon encountered rifle and machine-gun fire from Japanese positions at a stream crossing near which the advance had been stopped the previous afternoon. In an attempt to outflank the Japanese, the 1st Platoon moved inland about 300 yards and into line south of the 3d. This maneuver led the 1st Platoon into dense jungle where it was stopped by determined enemy resistance. Further probing of the enemy defenses proved fruitless and, as night was approaching, Captain Fulmer pulled the platoon out of action. The unit moved back to the beach and dug in about 600 yards west of the stream crossing, where the 3d Platoon had already set up defenses.

About 1100 on the 13th the 2d Platoon, with a section of 81-mm. mortars and another of .50-caliber machine guns attached, arrived in the forward areas. The riflemen of 2d and 3d Platoons then joined forces and pushed on down the coast through the scene of the previous afternoon's encounter until held up at another steam crossing by new enemy defenses. The 1st Platoon remained behind to protect the mortars and machine guns. Scouts having reported that the Japanese were firmly entrenched at the new crossing, Captain Fulmer decided to employ the heavy weapons to soften the opposition. The 81-mm. mortars and the .50-caliber machine guns fired for about twenty minutes on the enemy defenses, and a section of 60-mm. mortars joined in the last ten minutes of the barrage. Under cover of this fire the 2d and 3d Platoons formed along the west bank of the small stream on a front extending 300 yards inland. The

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3d Platoon was on the beach and the 2d Platoon on the right. At 1400 the preparation fire ceased and the two platoons jumped off in a concerted attack eastward. The 3d Platoon crossed the small creek near the mouth without difficulty and pushed eastward nearly 500 yards before encountering any resistance.

The situation in the 2d Platoon's sector was quite different. There the ground was covered with sago palms, underbrush, and heavy jungle growth which limited visibility to five or ten yards. The platoon ran into concentrated rifle and machine-gun fire immediately after starting its attack and was unable to force a crossing of the small stream. The platoon leader disengaged his force and tried to cross the creek farther inland. But the enemy refused his left flank and the maneuver failed. Because the dense rain forest mashed their fires, mortars and heavy machine guns could not support further advances in the inland sector. Captain Fulmer therefore pulled the platoon out of action on the right flank, drew it back to the beach, and sent it across the stream along the route taken by the 3d Platoon. After crossing the creek and drawing abreast of the 3d Platoon, the 2d Platoon again attacked in a southeasterly direction.

The unit overran a small Japanese supply dump and aid station and advanced fifty to 100 yards inland, but then it was again pinned down by enemy machine-gun fire. One squad attempted to find the left of the enemy's defenses by moving 100 yards into the jungle. This effort proved futile. Since the forward elements of the 2d Platoon were now being fired on from both the south and the east and because it was again impossible to support the unit with mortar or machine-gun fire, no further progress could be expected. The 3d Platoon had been forced to halt because of the danger of being cut off by the Japanese opposing the 2d Platoon. Captain Fulmer decided to halt the attack and establish a night perimeter.

The 3d Platoon anchored its left flank on the beach at a point about 150 yards east of the small stream extending its lines about fifty yards inland and westward another seventy-five yards. The 2d Platoon tied its left into the right of the 3d and stretched the perimeter west to the mouth of the creek.

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About 200 yards beyond the eastern edge of this perimeter was an outpost of eight men, including mortar observers who were in contact with the main force by sound-powered telephone. Inside the larger perimeter were 60-mm. mortars, light machine guns, .50-caliber machine guns, and an aid station. Since the 81-mm. mortars could not obtain clearance in the area chosen for the main force, they remained under the protection of the 1st Platoon in a separate perimeter about 500 yards to the west. It seemed certain that the Japanese who had been holding up the advance during the day would attack during the night, and was considered probable that such an attack would come through the heavy jungle at the southern, or inland, side of the main perimeter, where visibility was limited to five yards even in daylight.

The expected attack was not long in coming, although its initial direction was not that which had been anticipated. Shortly after 0200 on 14 May, following a short preparation by grenades, light mortars and light machine guns, 100 to 200 Japanese (of the 78th Infantry, 20th Division)[24] attacked from the east

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24 This identification is from 18th Army Opns, III, .

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against the coastal sector of the perimeter. This assault was broken up by rifle and automatic weapons fire and by lobbing mortar shells to the rear of the advancing enemy group. The Japanese disappeared into the jungle south of the narrow beach. For the next hour Captain Fulmer's mortars placed harassing fire into suspected enemy assembly points east of the small stream. Meanwhile, the eight-man outpost reported that many small parties of Japanese were moving up the beach within 300 yards of the main perimeter and then slipping southward into the jungle. Such maneuvers seemed to presage another attack.

The second assault came about 0330, this time against the eastern and southeastern third of the defenses. The Japanese were again beaten back by small arms and mortar fire, but at 0500 made a final effort which covered the entire eastern half of the perimeter. This last attack was quickly broken up and the Japanese quieted down. About 0730 on the 14th elements of Company A, 127th Infantry, began moving into the forward perimeter to reinforce Captain

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Fulmer's beleaguered units. The 1st Platoon of Company C and the 81-mm. mortar section also moved forward in preparation for continuing the advance.

But now questions arose at the headquarters of the East Sector and the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE concerning the feasibility of further advance. Captain Fulmer was willing to continue forward if he could be reinforced by a rifle platoon of Company A, another section of heavy machine guns, and another section of 81-mm. mortars. Colonel Howe and General Gill looked on the matter from a different point of view. It would be extremely difficult, they realized, to establish an overland supply system for the advancing force and they knew that there were not enough small boats available in the Aitape area to insure overwater supply. Furthermore, additional advances would accomplish little unless a large base for future operations could be established well beyond the Marubian area. This project was not considered feasible because troops and amphibious craft were lacking. Moreover, the principal mission of the PERSECTION TASK FORCE was to protect the Tadji airfields, not to commit itself to large scale offensive operations. Finally, General Gill decided to withdraw the Nyaparake Force's advance elements from the Marubian area to the west bank of the Dandriwad River. The unit was to be replaced by Company A, under the command of Capt. Herman Bottcher, who was to carry out a holding mission of the west bank of the Dandriwad.

Withdrawal from Yakamul

On 13 May the bulk of Company A arrived at Ulau Mission, just west of the mouth of the Dandriwad.[25] Company C remained in its perimeter near

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25 Unless otherwise indicated, information in this section is taken from: 127th Inf Jnl Files, 15 - 31 May and 1 - 11 Jun 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 28 June 44; 32d Rcn Trp Opns Rpt Aitape, pp. - ; PTF G - 3 Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - ; 1st Bn 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 27 Jun 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - .

Marubian. There was little action on the 13th, but events the next day

prompted the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE to decide upon a change in plans. During the morning of 14 May, Japanese patrols moved between Company C and the Dandriwad River, cutting the company's overland line of withdrawal. At the same time, strong enemy patrols harassed Company A's positions at Ulau Mission. It seemed apparent that the American outposts could not long withstand this pressure and, therefore, both companies were picked up by small craft during the next morning and taken westward to Nyaparake, whence the advance eastward had begun a week earlier.

The Nyaparake Force (by now comprising Companies A, C, and D of the 127th Infantry) was concentrated at Nyaparake by noon on the 15th. During the next few days its elements continued patrolling, making contacts with well-organized enemy units which appeared to be more aggressive and larger than those previously encountered in the East Sector. Companies C and D returned to Tadji Plantation on 19 May and were replaced at Nyaparake by the 32d Reconnaissance Troop.

On the same day Brig. Gen. Clarence A. Martin, Assistant Division Commander of the 32d Division, was placed in command of the East Sector and charged with the missions previously assigned to Colonel Howe -- to maintain contact with and delay enemy units moving westward. General Martin was directed to move all elements of the East Sector excepting the Nyaparake Force to the west bank of the Driniumor River.[26] The Nyaparake Force, now comprising the 32d Reconnaissance

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26 PTF FO No. 3, 19 May 44, in PTF G - 3 Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44.

Troop and Company A, 127th Infantry, was placed under the command of Captain Bottcher, who was transferred from Company A to the command of the reconnaissance unit. To render the force more mobile, all its heavy equipment was sent back to Tadji, and the unit was instructed to retire to the Driniumor River in case Japanese pressure increased.

Captain Bottcher's patrols soon found that enemy pressure was indeed to increase. Japanese action duplicated that earlier in the month in the Marubian area. First came small patrols, observing and scouting but avoiding contact. These groups were followed by larger and more aggressive parties which attacked

Nyaparake Force patrols and outposts. While such Japanese patrols were active to the east of the Nyaparake Force, other enemy units outflanked the force to the south and, about 1850 on 22 May, attacked from the west. During the following night the Nyaparake Force fought its way out of this encirclement and retired two miles along the beach to Parakovio.

The next day's events counselled further withdrawal. On orders from General Martin, most of Company A was sent back to Tadji; a company of Japanese was seen crossing the Harech River in a westerly direction south of Parakovio; an enemy platoon occupied Nyaparake; and small parties of Japanese begn to harass the new perimeter at Parakovio. Under cover of darkness during the night of 23 - 24 May, the remaining elements of the Nyaparake Force retreated westward to Yakamul, and the next morning withdrew again to better defensive positions at the mouth of a small creek about 3,000 yards west of Yakamul. The Japanese followed closely, and occupied Yakamul the next day. Captain Bottcher's patrols also noted that the enemy were establishing bivouac areas along the Harech River and were sending scouting parties westward along inland trails toward Afua and the Driniumor River.

By now it was evident that the Japanese had crossed the Drindaria in some force and it appeared that the aggressive enemy patrols had missions other than merely screening movements far to the east in the Wewak area. Deeming the Japanese movements a threat to the security of the Tadji airfields, General Gill decided to make an effort to drive the enemy's forward units back across the Drindaria River and for this purpose assigned the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, to the East Sector. The battalion was to move forward to the Nyaparake Force's perimeter, where Company G, 127th Infantry, was to relieve Captain Bottcher's men. The 126th Infantry's unit was to be supported by Battery C, 126th Field Artillery, from positions at the mouth of the Driniumor and by Battery B from the perimeter of Company G, 127th Infantry.

Company G completed the relief of the now misnamed Nyaparake Force on 31 May and about 1100 on the same day the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, reached the forward position. Lt. Col. Cladie A. Bailey's battalion pushed rapidly onward through Yakamul, from which the enemy withdrew hurriedly, and

moved on to Parakovio against little opposition. Company B left the main body at Yakamul to move up a branch of the Harech River about 2,500 yards to set up a patrol base.

Despite the lack of determined opposition on 31 May, it was soon to become evident that one battalion was not going to be strong enough to drive the Japanese forces already west of the Drindaria back across that stream. By this time, elements of the 78th and 80th Infantry Regiments, 20th Division, had been definitely identified west of the Drindaria. Although the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE did not yet know it, large segments of both regiments were operating in the Yakamul area, where they were supported by a few weapons of the 26th Field Artillery Regiment, 20th Division.[27] These Japanese forces now began to strike

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27 Information on enemy units in this section is based on: 2d Bn 80th Inf Field Diary, 31 May - 14 Jul 44, as translated in 32d Div G - 2 files, in ORB RAC AGO collection; 18th Army Opns III, - .

back at the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry.

On 1 June, the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, was able to advance only 400 yards beyond Parakovio before it was stopped by enemy machine gun and artillery fire. At 1115 General Martin ordered the battalion to cease offensive efforts and retire to Yakamul. Using that village as a base, the unit was to develop the enemy situation along the Harech River from the coast to the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains, five miles inland. Company B, already up the river, had to move back to Yakamul late in the afternoon because supply trains could not move south from the village through a gamut of Japanese patrols.

During the night of 1 - 2 June, Japanese artillery shelled the battalion command post and enemy patrols drove in outposts which had been set up just east of Yakamul. The next morning the battalion was divided into two parts. At Yakamul was stationed Company A, Headquarters Company, and part of Company D. This combined group, numbering about 350 men, was put under the command of Capt. Gile A. Herrick of Company A and designated Herrick Force. The rest of the battalion, now called Bailey Force, moved south down the trail from Yakamul

at 0845 on 2 June. Setting up a patrol base about two miles inland and one mile west of the Harech River, Bailey Force made few contacts with enemy units on the 2d and 3d.

Back at Yakamul Japanese had become very active around the perimeter of Herrick Force. On 3 June, the enemy launched a series of minor attacks against Company A, which was separated from the rest of Herrich Force by a small, unbridged stream about four feet deep and varying in width from ten to fifty yards. Under cover of these attacks, other Japanese groups by-passed Herrick Force to the south and on the next morning became active west of Yakamul betwaen Herrick Force and the perimeter of Company G, 127th Infantry, two miles to the west.

Sporadic small arms fire, intensifying during the afternoon, was directed at all parts of the Herrick Force perimeter during 4 June. About 1640 this fire was augmented by motar and artillery shells, a development which seemed to presage an imminent Japanese infantry attack. At 1830 an enemy force of more than company strength surged out of the jungle on the southeast side of the American perimeter in an apparent attempt to drive a wedge between Company A and the rest of Herrick Force. The attack was halted by automatic weapons fire and by the barrier presented by the small stream. The enemy then turned northeast from the creek against Company A. Simultaneously, a small group of enemy attacked west along the beach.

As Company A was in danger of being surrounded, Captain Herrick ordered the unit to withdraw across the small stream to Yakamul. Since the Japanese had the stream covered with small arms and at least one well-concealed machine gun, the withdrawal was a slow process and consumed over an hour. During the movement the Japanese continued to attack and, toward the end of the hour, succeeded in overrunning some of Company A's automatic weapons positions. Deprived of this support, most of the remaining troops retreated rapidly across the stream, leaving behind radios, mortars, machine guns, and twenty to twenty-five dead or wounded men. Most of the wounded managed to get across the stream after darkness, which was approaching by the time of the enemy's final attack.

By 1940 the Japanese were in complete possession of the Company A position, whence they could send flanking fire toward the Yakamul perimeter. Captain

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Herrick ordered his men to dig in deeply. He reorganized his positions and even put some of the lightly wounded on defensive posts. Japanese ground attacks kept up until 2200, and sporadic bursts of motar, grenade, and machine-gun fire continued throughout the night.

When he learned of the situation at Yakamul, General Martin ordered Bailey Force to return to the coast and relieve Herrick Force. This order, although originating at East Sector Headquarters at 1850, did not reach the Bailey Force command post until about 2000.[28] For some reason, Colonel Bailey did not start his force moving north until 2200, by which time the Japanese had a strong force astride the trail leading to Yakamul. Finding it impossible to accomplish his original mission, Colonel Bailey swung his unit northwest toward the perimeter of Company G, 127th Infantry, two miles west of Yakamul. After an arduous overland march through trackless, heavily jungled terrain, the leading elements of Bailey Force began straggling into Company G's perimeter about 1130 on 5 June.

28 The time of origin given for this message is that stamped on a copy in the 127th Inf Jnl File, 1 - 11 Jun 44 and its time of receipt is taken from the copy in the 1st Bn 126th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 27 Jun 44.

General Martin then ordered Bailey Force to move east and drive the Japanese from the Yakamul area, but this order was changed when the East Sector commander learned that Bailey Force had been marching for over thirteen hours on empty stomachs and was not yet completely assembled at Company G's perimeter. Bailey Force was thereupon fed from Company G's limited food supply and then was sent west along the coastal trail to the Driniumor River. Company G and the battery of the 126th Field Artillery it had been protecting moved back to the Driniumor late in the afternoon.

Meanwhile, the evacuation of Herrick Force from Yakamul had also been ordered, and about 1115 on 5 June small boats arrived at Yakamul from Blue Beach to take the beleagured troops back to the Tadji area. Insofar as time permitted, radios, ammunition, and heavy weapons for which there was no room

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on the boats were destroyed. As this work was underway, a few light mortars and light machine guns kept up a steady fire on the Japanese who, now surrounding the entire perimeter, had been harassing Herrick Force since dawn. At the last possible moment, just when it seemed the Japanese were about to launch a final infantry assault, Captain Herrick ordered his men to make for the small boats on the run. The move was covered by friendly rocket and machine-gun fire from an LCM standing offshore, while the Japanese took the running men under fire from the old Company A positions. So fast and well-organized was the sudden race for the boats that the Japanese had no time to get all their automatic weapons into action, and only one American was wounded during the boarding. The small craft hurriedly left the area and took Herrick Force back to Blue Beach, where the unit was re-equipped. By 1500 the troops had rejoined the rest of the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, on the Driniumor River.

Losses of the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, during its action in the Yakamul area were eighteen men killed, seventy-five wounded, and eight missing. The battalion estimated that it had killed 200 to 250 Japanese and wounded many more.[29]

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29 Japanese postwar figures, given in 18th Army Opns, III, , indicated that Japanese losses in the Yakamul area from 31 May through 6 June were 100 men killed or wounded. Whatever the true figures, the estimate of the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, appears rather high.

Operations Along the Driniumor

While the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, had been patrolling in the Yakamul area, elements of the 127th Infantry had been operating to the west along the Driniumor River from Anamo, on the coast, six miles upstream to Afua.[30] Until the end of May, little Japanese activity had been noted in the

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30 Unless otherwise indicated, material in this section is from: PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - ; PTF G - 3 Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44; 127th Inf Jnl Files, 15 - 31 May, 1 - 11 / 12 June, - 18 Jun, and 19 - 27 Jun 44; 1st Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44; 3d Bn 127th Inf Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44; 127th Inf Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - .

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Anamo - Afua area, but on the 31st of the month a ration train carrying supplies up the west bank of the Driniumor to two platoons of Company L, 127th Infantry, at Afua were ambused and forced to fall back to the coast. Later in the day a party of Japanese estimated as a company strong was seen crossing the Driniumor River from east to west at a point about 1,000 yards north of Afua. By dusk, it appeared that at least two companies of Japanese had crossed the river near Afua and had established themselves on high, thickly jungled ground north and northwest of the village.

The next day, 1 June, Company B of the 127th Infantry arrived at Afua after an unopposed march over the rough inland trail which led eastward to that village via Chinapelli and Palauru, the latter lying eight miles west of Afua. During the next three days the company, later reinforced by elements of Company C, maneuvered in fruitless attempts to drive a Japanese group 75 - 100 strong off a low, jungled ridge about 1½ miles north of Afua. Colonel Howe, commanding the 127th Infantry, became concerned about the lack of success of his troops in the Afua area and early on the morning of 5 June radioed to the 1st Battalion commander: "This is the third day of maneuvering to drive the enemy off that ridge. So far today we have had no report of enemy firing a shot and we are not sure they are even there. I have been besieged with questions as to why we don't fight the enemy. Unless we can report some accomplishment today I have no alibis to offer. Push either Fulmer [Company C] or Sawyer [Company B] in there until they draw fire."31

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31 Msg, 127th Inf to 1st Bn 127th Inf, 5 Jun 44, in 127th Inf Jnl File, 1 - 11 Jun 44.

During the morning Companies B and C organized a final attack and cleared the ridge. Only five Japanese were killed by infantry action on the 5th — the rest of the enemy party had abandoned the position during the previous night. For the next few days the 1st Battalion (all of which had by now arrived at Afua) continued patrolling in the ridge area north of Afua killing two or three Japanese stragglers and finding twelve enemy dead, all of whom had been killed

earlier by American artillery fire.

Meanwhile, the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE had decided to establish an outer defensive line along the Driniumor River. The river, originating in the Torricelli Mountains south of Afua, ran almost due north through many gorges and over steep falls to a sharp bend at Afua. From Afua to its mouth, the river provided a natural defensive position. Along this six-mile stretch, the river had an open bed varying from 100 to 500 yards in width. Except during tropical cloudbursts, this section of the river was not much more than knee deep. There was thin vegetation along both sides of the river except for a few spots of thick jungle and heavy undergrowth on both banks near Afua. For the most part the dense rain forest which grew in the coastal plain between the foothills of the Torricelli Mountains and the coast did not approach within fifty to 100 yards of the Driniumor's banks.

The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, dug in for 3,600 yards along the west bank of the river north from Afua, while the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, covered the same bank south from the river's mouth about 2,000 yards. A gap of some 3,000 yards which was left between the two units was covered by patrols. When, on 7 June, the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, replaced the 1st Battalion, 126th Infantry, on the northern portion of the defense line, a company of the former unit was strung out along some 500 yards of the gap.

On the same day, Japanese activity broke out anew in the Afua area, this time about 1,300 yards west of Afua on the Afua - Palauru trail, which had now become a main supply line for troops stationed in the Afua area. Two days later, the Japanese had disappaeared from the Afua - Palauru trail, much to the surprise of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE. The task force intelligence section decided that the enemy had withdrawn when his ration and ammunition supply was depleted, and this belief was strengthened during the next day or so when, contrary to previous sightings, all Japanese patrol movements in the Driniumor River area seemed to be from west to east.

For a couple of days, some thought had been given to withdrawing the 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry, from Afua because of the apparent threat to the Afua - Palauru supply line, but on 10 June the Headquarters, PERSECUTION TASK FORCE, decided to leave the battalion in place. On the same day, the East Sector was

ordered to speed development of strong defensive positions along the Driniumor. The river line was to be held as long as possible in the face of a Japanese attack and, if forced back, the East Sector troops were to delay enemy advances in successive positions west to the Main Line of Resistance around the Tadji airfields. The East Sector was to undertake vigorous patrolling east of the Driniumor in order to maintain contact with the enemy.[32]

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32 PTF FO No. 4, 10 Jun 44, in PTF G - 3 Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44.

After 10 June, Japanese patrols in the Driniumor area became less numerous and less aggressive. However, more determined enemy parties were located across the Driniumor northeast of Afua in hilly and heavily forested terrain along southern branches of Niumen Creek, which lay about 3,000 yards east of the Driniumor. The Japanese appeared to be forming a counterreconnaissance screen along Niumen Creek in order to prevent East Sector troops from finding out anything about deployments further east. So successful were the enemy efforts that few patrols of the 127th Infantry (the 3d Battalion replaced the 1st at Afua on 22 June) managed to push beyond Niumen Creek.

In the area covered by the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, some patrols were able to move east along the coast as far as Yakamul, but about 20 June the Japanese put more forces into the Yakamul area and stopped American patrolling in the region. In an attempt to gather additional information, one patrol was carried far down the coast to Suain Plantation. There a landing was made in a veritable hornet's nest of Japanese activity and the few men who reached the beach were hurriedly withdrawn. No more such long-range efforts to obtain information were made.

The closing days of June found the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE still in firm possession of the Tadji airfield area. Operations on the west flank had overcome all Japanese opposition in that region, and no more enemy activity had been encountered there after early May. On the east flank, however, the situation was far different. All elements of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE which had moved east of the Driniumor River had been gradually forced back until, at the end of the month, even small patrols were having difficulty

operating on the east side of the river. As the month ended, the task force's eastern defenses were along the west bank of the Driniumor, where the 1st Battalion, 128th Infantry, and the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, were digging in, anticipating future attacks by elements of the 18th Army. Except for minor outposts, the rest of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE was encamped behind the Tadji airfield Main Line of Resistance.

Support of East Sector Operations.

East Sector forces were supplied by a variety of methods. Units along the coast were supported directly by small boat from Blue Beach or by native ration trains moving along the coastal track. Supplies to the Afua area went south from the coast along the Anamo - Afua trail or, later, over the inland track from the Tadji fields through Chinapelli and Palauru. Wheeled transport was impracticable except along short stretches of the coastal track. When, in early June, the Japanese ambushed many ration parties which attempted to reach Afua, experiments were made with air supply from the Tadji strips. Breakage and loss were heavy at first, but air supply rapidly became more successful as pilots gained experience and ground troops located good dropping grounds. Finally, a dropping ground was cleared on the west bank of the Driniumor about 2,200 yards north of Afua and air drop soon became the principal means by which troops in the Afua area were supplied.[33]

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33 PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - ; 127th Inf Jnl Files, 1 - 11, 12 - 18, and 19 - 27 Jun 44, PTF G - 3 Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44.

Communications during operations east of the Driniumor were carried out principally by radio, but between units along the river and from the stream back to higher headquarters, telephone became the principal means of communication. Keeping the telephone lines in service was a task to which much time and effort had to be devoted. The Japanese continually cut the lines, or American troops and heavy equipment accidentally broke the wires. The enemy often stationed riflemen to cover breaks in the line, thus making repair work dangerous. Usually, it was found less time-consuming and less hazardous to string new wire than to attempt to find and repair breaks. As a result,

miles and miles of telephone wire soon lined the ground along the trails or was strung along the trees in the Driniumor River area and back to the Tadji perimeter.[34]

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34 Interviews with Brig Gen Julian W. Cunningham, ex-CG 112 Cav RCT, and Capt Leonard Lowry, ex-CO Company I, 127th Inf, Apr 47, copies in OCMH files. Many of the remarks concerning telephone and radio communications in this section are based on the experience of the 112th Cavalry in operations along the Driniumor River after 28 June. According to Captain Lowry, who had been in the Aitape area since 23 April, the remarks apply equally well to the period prior to 28 June. The journals of all units of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE during the period 22 April to 28 June contain many entries concerning the difficulties of communications, especially radio, in the Aitape area.

To mid-June, most telephone messages in the East Sector were sent "in the clear," but then accumulated evidence began to indicate that the Japanese were tapping East Sector lines. On 19 June, therefore, the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE directed that no more clear text telephone messages be used in the East Sector. As in the case of the telephone, all radio messages, of which some concerning routine matters had been previously sent in the clear, were encoded after mid-June.[35]

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35 PTF G - 3 Jnl, 4 May - 28 Jun 44.

Radio communications presented no particular problems in the coastal region but inland radio trouble was chronic and sometimes acute. Radio range was limited, especially at night, by dense jungle and atmospheric conditions, while almost daily tropical storms originating over the Torricelli Mountains hampered both transmission and reception. At times the only way radio could be employed in the Afua area was by having artillery liaison sets transmit to artillery liaison planes flying directly overhead. There were some indications that the Japanese tried to jam East Sector radio circuits, but there was never any proof that the suspected jamming was anything more than static caused by adverse

atmospheric conditions.[36]

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36 The suspicion that the Japanese tapped telephone lines and jammed radio circuits is to be found in the journals and reports of most of the American units which operated in the Aitape area from 22 April to mid-August 1944. However, no Japanese documents captured at the time, no on-the-spot interrogations of prisoners, and no postwar Japanese reports contain any evidence that the enemy engaged in either practice.

Principal naval support for units in the Aitape area after the end of April was provided by U.S. Seventh Fleet PT's which operated from a base at Blue Beach. These speedy craft devoted most of their attention to Japanese barge traffic east of Aitape, sinking or damaging so many of the enemy craft that the 18th Army was forced to limit its westward movements to poor overland trails. One of the largest single "bags" was obtained during the night of 26 - 27 June when fifteen Japanese barges were sunk near Wewak. In addition to their anti-barge activity, the PT's also undertook many reconnaissance missions both east and west of Aitape and, from time to time, provided escorts or fire support for East Sector units operating east of the Driniumor. The PT's also carried out many daylight patrols in co-operation with Australian aircraft based on the Tadji strips. The principal targets of these air - sea operations were Japanese coastal guns and troop concentrations along the beach between the Drindaria and Danmap Rivers.[37]

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37 PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - .

Close air support and other air missions requested by the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE were carried out under the direction of No. 10 Operational Group, Royal Australian Air Force. From 24 April through 12 May this group's combat planes comprised three P - 40 squadrons of No. 78 Wing, which was commanded by Wing Comdr. W. D. Brooks (RAAF). The wing moved out of the Aitape area toward the end of May and from the period 25 May to 9 June only the 110th Reconnaissance Squadron, U.S. Fifth Air Force, was stationed at Tadji. On the 9th a squadron

of Beau-fighters (twin-engined fighters) of the Royal Australian Air Force's No. 71 Wing arrived at Tadji and by the 15th two more squadrons of the same wing, both equipped with Beauforts (twin-engined fighter-bombers), had reached Aitape. On the 22d of the month No. 10 Operational Group, commanded by Air Commodore F. R. W. Scherger (RAAF), left Tadji and control of air operations in the Aitape area passed to Wing Comdr. R. H. Moran (RAAF) of No. 71 Wing.

In May, the Australian aircraft flew over 1,600 sorties and dropped almost fifty-seven tons of bombs of all types on ground targets from Aitape to Wewak. During June the pace of air operations was stepped up and from the 7th of that month until 6 July the two Beaufort squadrons alone flew 495 sorties and dropped about 325 tons of bombs. When more bombing than the Tadji-based Beauforts could provide was needed, A - 20's and B - 25's of the Fifth Air Force, flying first from Nadzab in eastern New Guinea and later from Hollandia, swung into action. The Australian Beauforts were also occasionally pressed into service as supply aircraft, dropping rations and ammuntion to American forces along the Driniumor. Most supply missions were, however, undertaken by Fifth Air Force C - 47's flying either from Nadzab or Hollandia or sometimes employing one of the Tadji strips as a staging base. Both Fifth Air Force and Australian planes also flew many reconnaissance missions between Aitape and Wewak. These operations, together with the bombing of such targets as coastal villages occupied by the Japanese, suspected enemy bivouac areas, bridges over the many streams between the Driniumor and Wewak, and Japanese field or antiaircraft artillery emplacements, materially assisted the East Sector in the execution of its delaying and patrolling missions.[38]

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38 Ltrs, F/Lt A. L. Davies (RAAF), Officer-in-Charge, War Hist Sec, Hq RAAF, to author, 8 May and 2 Apr 48, in OCMH files; PTF Opns Rpt Aitape, 4 May - 28 Jun 44, pp. - .

CHAPTER VI

Deployment for Battle

Reinforcement and Reorganization of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE

Prior to 22 April, the Allied forces of the Southwest Pacific Area had little information concerning the intentions of the 18th Army, but soon after that date, it was learned that the Japanese unit had planned to move from Wewak toward Hollandia. In May and June the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE, through the operations of the East Sector, had received many indications that a westward displacement on the part of the 18th Army was in full swing.

The Decision to Reinforce Aitape

For some time the Intelligence Section of Headquarters, ALAMO FORCE did not believe that the movements noted by the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE presaged a Japanese attack on the Aitape perimeter. Instead, ALAMO FORCE considered it more probable that the 18th Army was merely establishing strong points along the coast west from Wewak in order to delay Allied pushes eastward or to provide flank protection for the main body of the 18th Army which might attempt to by-pass Aitape and Hollandia to the south and join the 2d Army in western New Guinea.[1] Strength was added to the ALAMO FORCE beliefs when patrols of the Allied Intelligence Bureau,[2] operating far

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1 ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 40, 10 May 44, copy in G-2 DofA files.

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2 This bureau (the AIB) was an operating agency of G-2 GHQ SWPA. It sent patrols behind enemy lines to gather information by

a variety of means and its operations were classified Top Secret. Most of the white personnel of AIB parties operating in eastern New Guinea were Australians familiar with the terrain by reason of pre-war residence or exploration. Native police boys were also used, but only occasionally were American personnel attached to the AIB parties in eastern New Guinea. In the Aitape area, the PTF sent out a few long-range American patrols, and a few radio intelligence teams, operating to some extent under PTF direction and for other purposes on Top Secret missions for GHQ SWPA, were also sent inland from the Tadji perimeter.

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inland beyond the Torricelli Mountains, reported westward movement of many small Japanese parties along inland trails.[3] Because more

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3 ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Daily Rpt, 18 May 44, in ALAMO G-2 Jnl Hollandia, 10 May - 15 Jun 44.

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definite information was lacking, ALAMO FORCE, until mid-June, clung to the belief that the 18th Army was going to by-pass Aitape.[4]

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4 ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 45, 14 Jun 44, copy in G-2 DofA files, indicates a final change of attitude on the part of the ALAMO G-2 Section.

The first identifications of organized enemy units east of Aitape had been secured during operations near Marubian in mid-May, when it was found that elements of the 78th and 80th Infantry Regiments, 20th Division,[5] were operating in the Marubian area. Later the same month

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5 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 3134, 15 May 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl

Hollandia, 14 - 15 May 44; rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 3361, 16 May 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 16 - 18 May 44.

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it was discovered from captured documents that part of the 41st Division was along the Dandriwad River.[6] Next, a prisoner of war

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6 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 958, 21 May 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 19 - 21 May 44; rads, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF - 3604 and WF - 3526, 22 May 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 22 - 25 May 44.

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declared that the entire 80th Infantry had moved west from Wewak to the Dandriwad River.[7] At the end of May an Allied Intelligence Bureau

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7 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1152, 29 May 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 26 - 29 May 44.

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patrol captured documents which indicated that the 41st Division might be moving rapidly westward to attack both Hollandia and Aitape and that the bulk of the 20th Division was already in the Aitape area. This last information, combined with other reports, indicated to the ALAMO FORCE Intelligence Section that the 18th Army might be mounting a two-pronged assault on Aitape with the 20th Division attacking along the coast and the 41st Division striking over inland trails.[8]

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8 Rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF - 5374 and WF - 6412, 30 May 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 May - 2 Jun 44; ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 43, 31 May 44, copy in G-2 DofA files.

New information coming to light early in June switched the divisions' place of attack, tentatively located the command post of

the 20th Division near Charov on the Drindaria River, and identified elements of the 78th Infantry along the Driniumor River in the Afua area.[9] ALAMO FORCE now believed that the 20th Division was already

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9 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1450, 10 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 7 - 12 Jun 44; rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1491, 12 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 13 - 19 Jun 44; ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 45, 14 Jun 44, copy in G-2 DofA files.

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in place east of Aitape and was waiting for the 41st Division to move up prior to attacking. The other division of the 18th Army, the 51st, was thought to be at Wewak, and it was believed that no orders had been issued for it to move westward. It now seemed evident that the 18th Army was preparing an attack and that the Japanese parties previously encountered along inland trails south of the Torricelli Mountains were service troops no longer needed at Wewak or men who had started moving west prior to 22 April. ALAMO FORCE expected that the two forward divisions could be in position to launch an attack on the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE by the end of June.[10]

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10 Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF - 3097, 15 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 13 - 19 Jun 44; ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 45, 14 Jun 44.

ALAMO FORCE estimated that a Japanese assault could gain only a temporary containment of Allied forces at Aitape and that any attack would be a diversionary measure aimed at delaying further Allied advances in western New Guinea. Such an attack would have much to recommend itself to higher Japanese headquarters which, the ALAMO FORCE Intelligence Section believed, had probably already become

reconciled to the loss of the 18th Army.[11]

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11 Rad, ALAMO to PTF, WF - 6412, 30 May 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 30 May - 2 Jun 44; ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 43, 31 May 44, copy in G-2 DofA files.

As a result of the mounting indications that the 18th Army might be preparing an attack on Aitape, General MacArthur's headquarters, on 17 June, questioned ALAMO FORCE concerning the advisability of reinforcing the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE. General Headquarters considered it improbable that an 18th Army assault could seriously menace the Allied position at Aitape, but did think it possible that the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE might need reinforcing if the 18th Army should muster all its available strength for an attack. General Headquarters informed ALSMO FORCE that the U.S. 43d Infantry Division was scheduled for an early move to Aitape in order to stage there for operations farther west. But that division could not arrive at Aitape before the end of the first week in July. General Headquarters therefore suggested that if it appeared necessary to reinforce the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE before July, a regiment of the 31st Infantry Division might be made available immediately.[12]

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12 Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO, CX - 13847, 17 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 13 - 19 Jun 44. The 43d Division had previously been in combat in the South Pacific Area, but the 31st Division had not yet been in action and was finishing amphibious and jungle training at Oro Bay, New Guinea.

To these suggestions ALAMO FORCE replied that many preparations had already been made at Aitape to meet any attack by the 18th Army. For instance, ammunition supply and hospitalization facilities had both recently been increased. General Krueger believed that the forces already at Aitape could, if properly handled, beat off any Japanese attack that might occur prior to the 43d Division's arrival. However, if it looked necessary, he might send the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team to Aitape. He considered that unit preferable to a regiment of the 31st Division, since he wanted to keep the 31st Division intact for a future operation. He requested an early decision from General MacArthur's headquarters concerning which unit should be moved to Aitape.[13]

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13 Rad, ALAMO to GHQ SWPA, WF - 3592, 18 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 13 - 19 Jun 44. The 112th Cavalry RCT comprised the 112th Cavalry Regiment, the 148th Field Artillery, and supporting troops. The RCT, which was a separate unit not part of any division, had seen action on New Britain.

While higher headquarters were reaching a decision concerning reinforcements, new information obtained by the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE prompted a change in plans. Documents captured after mid-June indicated that the Japanese were to complete a thorough reconnaissance south, southeast, and east of the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE's perimeter by the end of June in preparation for an attack by the 20th and 41st Divisions. This attack, it appeared, awaited only the completion of the reconnaissance and the arrival of the bulk of the 41st Division in the forward area.[14]

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14 Rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1659, 19 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl

Hollandia, 13 - 19 Jun 44; rad, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1694, 20 Jun 44, in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 25 Jun 44; ALAMO FORCE, G-2 Wkly Rpt No. 46, 21 Jun 44, copy in G-2 DofA files.

By this time the PERSECUTION TASK FORCE's 155-mm. artillery had been sent to new operational areas in western New Guinea and tentative plans had been made to send the Beaufighter and Beaufort squadrons of No. 71 Wing westward also. General Gill, upon receiving the new information concerning enemy intentions, requested that the air support squadrons be retained or replaced; that a battalion of 155-mm. howitzers be sent to Aitape; and that the 112th Cavalry Regimental Combat Team be moved forward immediately.[15]

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15 Rads, PTF to ALAMO, AE - 1699 and AE - 1711, 20 Jun 44, and AE - 1806, 24 Jun 44; rads, ALAMO to PTF, WF - 3970, 20 Jun 44, and WF - 4060, 21 Jun 44. All rads in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 25 Jun 44.

A few days later General MacArthur's headquarters, which had secured the information from Ultra Secret sources (radio intercepts), informed ALAMO FORCE that the 18th Army planned to attack about the end of the first ten days in July, employing 20,000 troops in the forward area and another 11,000 in reserve.[16] ALAMO FORCE immediately

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16 Rad, GHQ SWPA to ALAMO Adv Hq, C - 14133, 24 Jun 44; rad, ALAMO Rear Hq to ALAMO Adv Hq, WF - 4646, 24 Jun 44. Both rads in ALAMO G-3 Jnl Hollandia, 20 - 25 Jun 44. At this time ALAMO Advance Headquarters was at Hollandia, while the rear echelon of the headquarters remained at Finschhafen in eastern New Guinea.