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OPERATIONS OF THE PROVISIONAL AIR CORPS REGIMENT IN THE  
DEFENSE OF BATAAN PENINSULA, P.I., 8 JANUARY-10 APRIL 1942  
( PHILIPPINE ISLANDS CAMPAIGN)

(Personal experience of a Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: REGIMENT IN THE DEFENSE

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P- Report of Operations, South Luzon Force, Bataan Defense Force, and II Philippine Corps in the Defense of South Luzon and Bataan from 8 December 1941 to 9 April 1942. Annex V. ( Report of Major General George M. Parker, Jr. ) ( Page references are to typewritten copy of report.)

W- Report of Operations of USAFFE and USFIP , 1941-42. (Report of General Wainwright) ( Page references are to typewritten copy of report.)

NOTE: Except where specifically so stated, this monograph is based on personal experience wherever possible, and otherwise on information gained in three and a half years close association with other officers of the regiment. Most available references were, with the exception of the above, found to be extremely unreliable or failed to make any mention of the Regiment discussed.

OPERATIONS OF THE PROVISIONAL AIR CORPS REGIMENT IN  
THE DEFENSE OF BATAAN PENINSULA, 8 JAN.-10 APRIL 1942  
( PHILIPPINE ISLANDS )

( Personal Experience of Platoon Leader, 2nd Platoon,  
Hq. & Hq. Squadron, 1st Battalion, Provisional Air  
Corps Regiment, II Philippine Corps, USAFFE )

INTRODUCTION

Many units of other arms and services were called upon in World War II to fill the role of Infantry in times of emergency. This is the narrative of just such a unit. Born in the jungles of Bataan on 7 January 1942, The Provisional Air Corps Regiment spent its brief existence in almost continuous front line service, and then died twice. It died as an organization with the surrender of the American Forces on Bataan on 9 April 1942, and the bulk of the survivors of the death of their regiment perished individually during the ensuing three and a half years of Japanese captivity.

Personnel for this regiment were drawn from units of the Far Eastern Air Force of the United States Army on Bataan Peninsula, Philippine Islands. FEAF was later designated 5th Interceptor Command as far as the units on Bataan were concerned, and FEAF itself established headquarters to the south. Prior to the outbreak of hostilities FEAF was the nucleus of an expanding organization. The initial enemy air attacks were directed at the installations of this force, and the destruction of facilities at Iba, Clark and Nichols Fields, coupled with the impossibility of replenishment due to the Pearl Harbor losses, crippled its effectiveness as an operational air force. Although work

was continued on auxiliary air fields on southern Luzon during December 1941 in the hope of aerial reinforcements arriving, the order for compliance with WPO 3 ( Known as the Orange Plan) which called for withdrawal to Bataan Peninsula, issued on 24 December 1941, destroyed that last possibility.

Early January 1942 found the Air Corps, consisting of the 20th Air Base Group( Reinforced), 24th Pursuit Group, units of the 27th Bombardment Group together with attached service units, in bivouac on the rear areas of Bataan. These same Air Corps troops, in aerial combat and in ground defense of their airfields against repeated Japanese aerial attacks had been the first troops in the Philippines to be engaged with the enemy. Units from Iba and Clark Fields had suffered especially heavy casualties in the morning raids of 8 December, and all units had been under considerable fire. The Nichols Field garrison had put up a stubborn machine gun defense with their 30 caliber guns until their field was blown to rubble about them. All had made the mental transition to wartime conditions.

Available aircraft were few on Bataan. Hasty fields had been constructed or were under construction at Pilar, Orani, Cabcaban, Bataan Field and Mariveles. Personnel were far in excess of Air Corps requirements. The greater part of such organizations as the 20th Air Base Group , formerly of Nichols Field, who now had no tactical Air Corps function, were immediately ordered to commence Infantry training. Personnel of the A20-A squadrons who had arrived in the Philippines without their planes did likewise. Their planes never came.

The events leading up to the situation which faced our forces on Bataan in the opening days of 1942 had been fast moving and disheartening. Widely scattered Filipino forces with insufficient artillery support or training had been unable to repel landing thrusts of the enemy on - to Luzon. With placing in effect of WPO 3 the South Luzon Force had successfully withdrawn to the north, through Manila, and onto Bataan while elements of the North Luzon Force kept the route open against efforts of the Japanese attacking southward. With the withdrawal complete the covering force broke contact with the enemy on the night of 6-7 January. The enemy was slow to follow and advanced south on the peninsula preceded by reconnaissance as he developed for combat. Contact was regained on 9 January with the American and Filipino forces holding a battle position from Abucay to Moron.

#### THE MAIN BATTLE POSITION

The main battle position for the Battle of Bataan was referred to as the Orion-Bagac Line, or the Orion Line. It will be referred to as the latter in this monograph. The initial heavy fighting took place north of this line on what was referred to as the Abucay Line, and it was not until 28 January that the Orion line became the main line of resistance.

Bataan Peninsula is a mountain mass forming a southern extension of the Zambales mountains. The three prominent terrain features with which we are concerned are from north to south, Mt. Natib, Mt. Samat and Mariveles Mt.. It was abreast of the two first named mountains that the battle positions were successively organized. The area on

the western side of the peninsula is more precipitous and jungle covered than the eastern half. North of Orion on the bay side of the peninsula, there was a comparatively flat, narrow, plain between Manila Bay and the eastern slopes of the mountains. This area had been devoted to sugar plantations and rice paddies. Along the edge of the bay the terrain was broken by long series of artificial fish ponds separated by high dikes.

The main highway leading southward into the peninsula ran along the east coast, and it was along this road that we find the bulk of the population of Bataan Province, as well as all municipalities of importance. This road was marked with kilometer posts giving the distance from the center of Manila. These provided valuable and reliable reference points.

A feature of tactical importance in municipalities such as Balanga, Pilar and Orion, which feature in these operations, were the churches. Built of soft but durable volcanic tuff they were of massive construction with thick lower walls to withstand time and earthquakes. They proved highly resistant to artillery, provided prominent landmarks, and afforded the enemy valuable observation.

Most of the civil population moved southward behind friendly lines, but a sufficient number remained in the coastal barrios, and even Orion when that municipality was between the OPIR and MIR, to raise a problem of security for patrols.

The II Philippine Corps, of which this regiment was a part, was assigned the mission of defending that portion

of Bataan previously designated as the East Sector, Bataan Defense Force.\* This was the eastern half of the peninsula. The I Philippine Corps was assigned the west half. The II Pn. Corps sector was subdivided into Subsectors A,B,C and D, from east to west. The Provisional Air Corps Regiment was assigned Subsector B which had a frontage of approximately 2000 yards. The approximate frontage of the II Pn Corps was 12000 yards.\*\*

The dominating terrain feature was Mt.Samat, along whose forward slope the battle positions of I and II Pn Corps made contact. From this mountain it was possible to gain observation over the entire Corps front.\*\*\*

Subsector B had the advantage of the San Vicente river roughly paralleling its front at from 400 to 800 yards from the MLR. This portion of the river was characterized by a deep channel with steep sides, and wide enough to constitute an anti-mechanized barrier over the greater part of its length in B sector. A branch, Bilolo Creek flowed from the right flank of subsector B, westward, and then into the San Vicente which flowed east to Manila Bay, passing through Orion. The road from Orion to subsector B crossed this creek . The demolition of this crossing appeared to be of doubtful effectiveness as a tank barrier. By damming Bilolo creek, the engineers were enabled to flood much of the rice paddy between the right flank of the position and the San Vicente River.

Concealment throughout this region was available under wide spreading and numerous mango trees. There were few trees immediately in front of the battle position.

\*-P page 28

\*\* -P p. 37-38

\*\*\*-P p. 37



Communication routes to the rear from Subsector B all led through one trail which was later improved into a vehicular road. There was a lateral road across the right half of the sector, immediately to the rear of the MIR, and emerging to the east through the MIR in the direction of Orion.

Fields of fire were generally good. The MIR was at the foot of rising ground merging into rice paddy. The right flank unit of the regiment was able to give enfilade fire across a portion of subsector A.

Observation was limited by the tree line along the San Vicente River. From the right flank of the regiment it was possible to observe clearly into Orion and in front of part of Subsector A, but not to the front of most of subsector B.

#### ORGANIZATION, PERSONNEL, ARMAMENT AND EQUIPMENT

The Provisional Air Corps Regiment was formed together as a unit for the first time on the night of 8-9 January near Barrio Bilolo, about 2 kilometers west of Orion.

Major William H. Maverick, A.C., C.O. of the 20th Air Base Group assembled personnel of his group and the 2nd Observation Squadron in their bivouac area near Km. 165 on the afternoon of 8 January and informed them that they were to move up as Infantry. He stated that they were going into a reserve position, would be charged with the duty of organizing it, and explained the necessity for their serving as Infantry. This was received well by the assembled troops and morale appeared high, considering the depressing effect of the general situation. The movement

was accomplished by motor after dusk. Troops were placed in bivouac in the vicinity of Bilolo, and early on the morning of 9 January unit commanders made their reconnaissance and organization of the position was commenced.

The regiment was formed of two battalions, both on line. The 1st Battalion was on the right, 2nd Battalion on the left. The component units were air corps squadrons which retained their original designations, but served as companies of Infantry. Regimental and Battalion staff organization was similar to Infantry.

Approximate strength of the regiment varied between 1000 \* and 1400\*\*. Personnel were withdrawn from time to time to perform technical Air Corps work at the airfields, and some were withdrawn for possible shipment to Mindanao or Australia. The number of the latter were negligible.

Component squadrons filling the roles of Infantry companies were as follows:

1st Battalion

Hq. & Hq. Squadron, 20th Air Base Group (R)  
19th Air Base Sqdn.       "       "  
27th Materiel Sqdn.       "       "       ( En. Reserve)  
28th Materiel Sqdn.       "       "  
7th Materiel Squadron

2nd Battalion

2nd Observation Squadron  
48th Materiel Squadron  
Hq. & Hq. Sqdn., 27th Bombardment Group  
91st Bomb. Sqdn.       "       "  
17th Bomb. Sqdn.       "       "

\*-P p. 44

\*\* -P p. 41

The following statement by Major ( then Captain ) John S. Coleman, commanding the 27th Materiel Squadron is typical of personnel and armament conditions throughout the regiment:

" We had 163 men of which an average of about 100 were on the front line near Orion. We had about 44 back at PNAD\* some on crash boat crews, some driving half tracks and tanks. We had on the front line 3 machine guns, of which 2 were water cooled Brownings and one Marlin machine gun. We had two BARs; the rest of the enlisted men had 30 caliber rifles and officers had 1 pistol each. We had two grenades each. Some carried 4 each on patrols. The 1st Battalion had about 34 machine guns. About 2/3 of them were machine guns taken off wrecked airplanes, of the 50 caliber class, and too heavy to carry around. Most of these were in front line trenches in offsets well concealed and fortified by sand bags and sod." \*\*

Several of the units also had Lewis Machine Guns, cal. 30, M1917 with either improvised mounts, or a pipe mount manufactured by the Philippine Ordnance Depot. Such devices as triple Lewis guns mounted in tandem with a solid bar to actuate the triggers of all three were made by the men. Of more practical value were twin 50 cal. air cooled Brownings with twin mount improvised, and used for anti-aircraft. Marlin machine guns were unreliable.

There were no mortars or anti-tank guns. 50 caliber AP ammunition was the only anti-mechanized defense. There were insufficient bayonets for all men, and scabbards for very few. The rifles were M1903. Some of the men traded their very scarce cigarettes with 31st Inf.(U.S.) soldiers to obtain M1 rifles in trade for their M1903. What action was taken

\*-PNAD- Philippine Air Depot

\*\* -Letter Major John.S.Coleman to writer, 31 Dec 1946.

by their surprised commanders against the losing party in these transactions is unknown.

Entrenching tools were lacking. The most serious shortage was in mosquito bars, as the country surrounding was infested with malarial mosquitos. The consequences of this and the shortage of food influenced, and will be discussed under, operations.

Nearly all enlisted personnel were Regular Army. The officers included many commissioned in Infantry and Field Artillery. Many of the non-commissioned officers and some of the privates had previous peactime service in ground forces. There were a number of qualified aerial gunners.

#### OPERATIONS 9 JANUARY- 15 JANUARY

During this period the Orion line was the reserve battle position. It was scarcely more than " a line on the map" \*. Fighting was taking place to the north on a line running east from Mt.Natib to the vicinity of Abucay, and west from Mt.Natib to the vicinity of Moron. Artillery was located in the vicinity of the regimental positions on the Orion line. Enemy aircraft were constantly overhead.

To assist in the work of field fortification, enlisted men with combat experience from the 31st Inf.(U.S.) were detailed to each unit as technical advisers. All officers were assembled and instructed by a Lt.Col. 31st Inf (U.S.) in devices learned in recent combat. Personal experience of the writer was that these enlisted "combat veteran" instructors exaggerated conditions of combat, gave distorted accounts of either Japanese cowardice or cunning which had

a disturbing and misleading effect on the troops outweighing the advantage of their assistance.

"Spider holes" with camouflaged lids were the individual shelters built upon the advice of these instructors. Their impracticality for a static position became quickly evident. Orders were issued to expand the shelters into a trench system, and all men were ordered to dig 8 hours a day. Double apron fences were laid, using bamboo pickets, cut from the nearby growths. Machine guns were sited along final protective lines wherever possible. Tin cans, etc. were tied to the wire. In many places bamboo stakes with pointed ends were driven at close intervals into the bottom angle of rice paddy dikes to destroy their value for cover.

Organization of the position during this period was hampered by the almost continuous presence of enemy aircraft. The primary enemy mission seemed to be the location of artillery, but the regimental position was bombed several times daily, producing casualties. Usual formations were three dive bombers, circling continually, and dropping bombs singly or in small numbers, with a shallow dive. It was a leisurely process and far more disturbing than a hit and run raid with equal number of bombs. There were no American planes in evidence. This absence of friendly aircraft was a depressant to morale.

Troops became aware of the blessings of the mango tree. Its outspread foliage could conceal anything from a foxhole to a Bn. CP, and the mess sergeant could brew a fair tea substitute from its dried leaves.

On the late afternoon of approximately 15 January, the 1st Battalion was alerted for a movement north. Assembly time was 1900 with full field equipment.

OPERATIONS PERIOD APPROX. 15 JAN.-22 JAN.

Units of the 1st Battalion marched from assembly areas to Orion, movement starting shortly after 1900 on the evening of approximately 15 January. It was a distance of a mile and a half, and after some short delay and minor confusion in the dark in Orion, troops entrucked and moved north. Destination of the movement was not known to men or junior officers. The column was a close one despite the road being in artillery range. Turning west along the Pilar-Bagac, the column continued with frequent delays, to a position in front of Mt. Samat, where they went into bivouac for the night.

Early the following morning the Battalion moved to the north with the 27th Materiel Sqdn. acting as advance guard. Enemy aircraft caused the foot column to deploy to the sides of the road on one occasion, but did not attack the column.

It became known that the destination was the vicinity of Guitol on a plateau between the Abo-Abo and Tidwir Rivers.

At this time enemy in unknown numbers had infiltrated around the left flank of the II Pn. Corps position on the MLR \*.

Arriving at the base of the plateau, S-3, 1st Bn. detailed Lt., 2nd Plat. Hq. Sqdn. to take one squad as a flank guard along the natural bench between the plateau and the Abo-Abo river to a point opposite the area, designated on his map with a pencil, at which the Battalion would halt. The flank guard was then to climb the cliff and rejoin the main body. In the execution of this mission it was learned that there were Philippine Army troops in front of us.

Prior to rejoining the main body the flank guard found a deserted nipa shack with several abandoned Enfield rifles, Philippine Army uniforms, ammunition, equipment, and several "dog tags" in the clearing. The rifles were destroyed, as much ammunition as possible salvaged, and the identification tags picked up and later turned over to 1st Bn. S-2.

Arriving at the top of the plateau the flank guard found the advance guard in an area already occupied by Philippine Army infantry, and learned that the main body had been ordered back several kilometers.

Moving to successive bivouac positions the units of the regiment performed "anti-sniper" duty. On approximately 22 January the regiment was ordered to reoccupy its position on the Orion line which was to be the MLR. Advance parties were sent ahead to locate new defiladed kitchen areas, and the remainder of the organization followed that evening, traversing the Pilar-Bagac road by motor without incident.

#### OPERATIONS PERIOD 22 JANUARY- 21 MARCH

The disintegration of the 51st Division (P.A.) left a gap on the left flank of the II Pn. Corps sector on the Abucay line for a period of 6 days. Unknown numbers of enemy had penetrated, and contact with the I Pn. Corps had been lost. These were among the considerations which led on 28 January to a general withdrawal to the main battle position on the Orion line.

Therefore it was on 28 January that the <sup>main</sup> regiment found themselves in the role of front line infantry, holding subsector B on the MLR.\*

On the right flank between the Provisional Air Corps Regiment and Manila Bay, subsector A was occupied by the 31st Combat Team ( P.A.). On the left subsector C was held by the 31st Division (P.A.) and remnants of the 51st Division (P.A.) under the command of Brig. Gen. Clifford Bluemel . Subsector D, holding the left of the II Pn.Corps position were Philippine Army troops of the 21st and 41st divisiona, and the 57th Infantry Regt.(P.S.), all commanded by Brig. Gen. Lough .

Col. Irvin E. Doane , Inf. was given command of the Provisional Air Corps Regiment, replacing Colonel Richards.

There was a slight readjustment of the subsector boundary which necessitated Hq. Squadron of the 1st Battalion placing both platoons in the line, and putting the corridor containing Bilolo Creek entirely within the sector.

Artillery in support of subsector B was also in support of subsector A. They were initially as follows: \*

21st Field Arty. (PA)	24	75mm guns
1st Bn. 24th F.A.(PS)	8	75mm
1st Bn. ( ? ) F.A.	4	2.95 inch
1st Bn. 88th F.A. (PS)	8	75 mm

In addition to supporting artillery, subsectors A and B were supported by the 192nd Tank Battalion. On 28 January this tank battalion whose primary mission was beach defense from Pandan south to Limay inclusive, was given the contingent mission of supporting the two subsectors. \*\*

The OPLR was at first placed along the south bank of the San Vicente River. It was then advanced about 1000 yards north of the river onto the open plain. Contact was made with the OPLR of units on both flanks.



Following the withdrawal to the main battle position on 28 January, an enemy force struck against subsectors C and D, but failed to make any permanent penetration. On 28 February this enemy force withdrew to reorganize.

There were no organized enemy positions on the open plain to the front of A and B sectors, and this area was covered by constant patrolling, both American and Japanese.\*

During this period 22 January to 21 March the main activity of the Provisional Air Corps Regiment consisted of patrolling this area, the formulation of plans for counter-attack in the event of any penetration, and the establishment of a regimental reserve line. Training was ordered in offensive combat, and it was explained to the men that if a relieving force succeeded in reaching Bataan, we would have the mission of pushing in the enemy outposts before the relieving force took over. This raised morale somewhat. Although the Commanding General of USAFFE had issued a statement to the troops that hundreds of ships and thousands of men were on the way\*\*a gradual realization of the hopelessness of the situation became evident among the men. All still had hopes of a convoy arriving, and on the occasion of false rumours to that effect there had been wild jubilation until the error became known. This training in offensive combat revived hopes for "the convoy". The destruction of two enemy dive bombers on one morning with 50 caliber machine guns also raised morale somewhat.

The RRL was laid out on the ground and a limited amount of work carried out on it, but the limited number of men

\*-P p.44

\*\*-Part of a letter which commanders were required to read to all troops.

available or in physical condition for work, hampered the effort. As there was no regimental reserve, front line units were assigned corresponding sectors to organize on the reserve line.

Patrols were sent northwards beyond the Tenejeros road. Many of these intelligence patrols were sent with the mission of establishing listening and observation posts in the area around and north of Balanga. The Japanese occupied the church in Balanga, and from that position were able to bring long range fire on patrols crossing the nearby areas by daylight. Casualties were sustained by our patrols in combat with this force. Other casualties were sustained near the Pilar - Bagac road when one of our patrols was ambushed on the edge of a cane field, the Lt., patrol leader, and other men killed. The withdrawal of the others was covered by the BAR man who was wounded in the leg. His body was later found, bayoneted. The body of the lieutenant was not recovered. It would be seen by daylight on successive days, but night patrols would find it gone. Among others the C.O. 2nd Observation Squadron was killed <sup>in</sup> ~~with~~ a skirmish with a small enemy force on the left flank of the regiment.

The enemy made intermittent attempts to shell the beach positions in A sector from barges with field pieces mounted thereon. Although the artillery duel was spectacular they were always driven off, and the closest shells fell between the OPIR and MTR.

Enemy dive bombers continued to harrass our troops,

\*- P p.42

and observation planes were constantly overhead. There was, however, no aerial activity at night, which made sleep possible. Had the Japanese attempted night bombing the effect on morale would have been increased.

It is necessary to describe the physical condition of the troops at this point, in order to give a clear picture of the critical situation.

All personnel had been placed on half rations in January. In March this was reduced to 1/4 rations, and the bread, which had amounted to about two slices each daily, was no longer available. The main staple of issue was rice, and the total of calories in the ration fell below 1000 calories daily.\*Two one pound cans of salmon was sometimes issued for more than 100 men. Substitutes were found for tea and coffee in the dried leaves of the mango tree, and sugar was only occasionally available in quantities of two pounds for a squadron.

All of the air corps squadrons from Nichols Field, and some from Clark Field, had salvaged and brought with them to the peninsula, moderate stocks of canned goods salvaged from their garrison messes. This was all confiscated by the Quartermaster Corps in January, with the explanation that it would be redivided among all troops. Much resentment was aroused when these items never appeared in issue. To aggravate the starved condition of the men reports circulated of better food conditions in the rear areas, and of far better food on Corregidor. Many of these stories were exaggerated, but many were true beyond doubt, especially as concerned food on Corregidor.

Local foraging for food in the vicinity of the MLR

became more fruitless as time progressed. Malnutrition was sapping the strength of the troops. A full days work on the never ceasing improvement of the position, coupled in many instances with 6 hours of guard duty or a night on the OPLR, brought men to the breaking point. It was common for men to pass out while lined up for mess. There was serious muscle wasting due to lack of protein \* and the Regimental surgeon reported signs of sub-clinical scurvey.

Prophylactic quinine became unavailable, mosquito nets were few and no additional could be procured. Most of the command contracted malaria. The C.O. 27th Materiel Squadron writes: " Every man the 27th Materiel Squadron but 1st Sgt. Boston had malaria before the surrender. I had only 47 men able to walk when the surrender came. Starvation and malaria were contributing factors to this." \*\*

C rations in limited quantities were available in some squadrons, and their consumption was limited to patrols only. Other units furnished their patrols with one sandwich per man for 36 hours. Men volunteered for patrols for the incidental food obtainable by foraging in the area between the opposing forces. Raw sugar cane, turnips and fruit were there for the fortunates. In spite of several men being killed in the immediate vicinity, a molasses tank in the north end of Pilar became an habitual stopping point for hungry patrols, where men would drink a pint or more of the craved food.

Patrols going north along the beach usually stopped at Camachile where filipino civilians conducted a black market in foodstuffs smuggled across the bay in "bancas" \*\*\* each morning before daylight. It was a precarious business and

\*- P. p 48

\*\* - Letter Major John S. Coleman to writer, 31 Dec. 1946

\*\*\* Native Boat

the traffic ceased when the Japanese intercepted the bancas on their way in and killed all concerned.

Filipino civilians continued to live between the opposing forces in the coastal area. Some were reported in company with Japanese soldiers, and they constituted a hazard to the security of our patrols.

Patrols brought in reports of enemy movements to the west of Abucay in the middle of March. Artillery fire became more intense, and although most of it was concentrated on C and D subsectors, subsector B was also shelled after the 15th of March.

The Commanding General of II Pn. Corps estimates the combat efficiency of his troops on 15 March as twenty per cent.\* His report on B sector for the period 26 January to 21 March is as follows: " Sub-sector B was occupied by a Provisional Infantry Regiment, strength approximately 1000, made up of Air Corps personnel ( American) Colonel I.E. Doane, Inf., commanding. Other than intermittent bombing and patrol action, no enemy contact was made in this sector during this period." \*\*

#### OPERATIONS PERIOD 21 MARCH- 10 APRIL

Between 21 March and 2 April there was increased patrol activity in the regimental sector. Enemy attacks on the two subsectors to the left had been repulsed, after minor penetrations were ejected.† An enemy landing attempt at Pandan on the night of 3-4 April was unsuccessful.\*\*\* \*

\*-P.p.48

\*\* -P p.44

\* P p.49

\*\*\*-P p.54

Shelling and bombing of front line positions became increasingly heavy . The enemy was massed in front of D and C subsectors for his main effort. The Filipino troops had undergone the same process of semi-starvation, and in addition were in many cases without shoes. On 6 April it was reported that the 21st Division (P.A.) had given way. \* The troops of C subsector and 31st Inf.(U.S.) attempted to hold a position along the San Vicente River. Brig. Gen. Bluemel personally attempted to organize the resistance, but was compelled to fall back on the Alongon River line. Here he attempted to defend with the remnants of the various units which were falling back. Many of the Filipino soldiers discarded their arms and equipment, and confusion was supreme.

For a clearer picture of what happened in B subsector we have the following from Captain (now Major) John S. Coleman of the Provisional Air Corps Regiment:

" The Orion line was broken the early part of the night of the 5th April, and I helped retake it that morning,.. I made a counter-attack to reestablish the Philippine regiment line on our left the 5th of April with all our reserves and one squadron taken out of the 2nd Battalion lines. They consisted of 2nd Observation, 27th Materiel, and I am not sure which squadron from the 2nd Battalion. ... then the night of the 6th they drove 7 kilometers perpendicular to our front line in the final break-through. This regiment withdrew to regimental reserve line early morning of the 7th to protect our exposed left flank. Japanese tanks cut through our left flank followed by infantry ; also a heavy frontal attack made by thousands unloading from the Bay up about Pilar, to our front. After tanks were running well behind our lines with Jap infantrymen

( we did not have a single anti-tank weapon) and while the Japs were making a strong frontal attack I ordered a withdrawal through a narrow place that had not been completely closed around us...We soon formed another line but tanks followed us into this position and dislodged us again...We marched the rest of the day and all night without any food except a little rice on the morning of the 7th, up to 4 o'clock the morning of the 8th..Then the food for one squadron was passed out to what was left of the regiment. We sniped Japanese all evening on our right and left because the units on either side of us had been compelled to withdraw by heavy bombing, phosphorus fires in wooded areas and by rifle fire. We were located by Jap dive bombers about 4:30. The rest of the daylight was spent in a fire fight with Jap infantrymen and dive bombers. We withdrew just before dark from this line and believe were the last to leave this line. We had to form an advance guard to retreat because we were almost surrounded by this time. Our rear guard kept up a fire fight with the Japs until about 2 o'clock that morning as we moved to the rear through a heavy forest." \*

Maj. General E.P.King, Jr. , commanding the forces on Bataan, went forward through the traffic choked main road and surrendered his forces to the Japanese. By midnight 8-9 April the enemy already had clear passage and further organized resistance had become impossible. The surrender was on the morning of 9 April.

The following is part of the message sent to President Roosevelt by General Wainwright on 9 April: " I have done

\*Letter Major John S.Coleman to writer, 31 Dec. 1946

all that could have been done to hold Bataan, but starved men without air support and with inadequate field artillery support cannot endure the terrific aerial and artillery bombardment that my troops were subjected to."

From this point on the fate of the personnel of the Provisional Air Corps Regiment was in common with all of Bataan. The long slow process of attrition started on the morning of 10 April with the Death March. This was the end for some, and for others the prelude. Their deaths were various. Starvation and malaria in prison camps on Luzon, exposure, drowning and bombing on the Japanese "hell ships", burning alive in gasoline drenched caves on Palawan, flogging and forced labor; all took their toll.

A few came home in September 1945.

#### ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The operations described in this monograph are not tactically outstanding, and in the light of comparison with engagements of other units in other campaigns may seem hardly worth writing about. The main value of the narrative lies more in the other, less publicized, aspects of warfare. It lies in the study of the reaction and behavior of men, not infantry by training or choice, who in a critical period are called on to so serve. It also deals with the effect on morale and fighting efficiency of such factors as hopeless isolation from reinforcement, starvation, malaria, ~~malaria~~, inadequate weapons, and no air support.

This regiment by being placed initially at the task of organizing a reserve battle position, and then gradually



becoming indoctrinated by experience for several weeks before their sector became the main battle position, largely made up for the shortcomings of training. A report of Brig. Gen. Casey, made after an inspection of front line positions, declared the positions of the Provisional Air Corps Regiment to be uniformly excellent. This same report was critical of many units on the line.

During the early stages of its operations a clear picture of the mission and situation did not reach either company grade officers or the men. The move to the vicinity of Guitol on approximately 15 January is an example of this.

Morale of the troops was affected less by the adverse military situation than by shortages of food, suspected, and often confirmed, inequities in food supplies between front and rear areas, and above all malaria.

The greatest single, ever present, depressant to morale from the tactical standpoint, was the unhampered operation of enemy aircraft over the frontlines with no American planes in evidence.

A great deal of the success of using these troops as infantry was attributable to their experience gained in defense of Clark and Nichols Fields against air attacks in the opening days of the war.

Although the final outcome of the battle could not have been altered by their presence, the absence of anti mechanized weapons in the regiment made itself keenly felt in the last few days operations.

From the 28th of January when the Orion line became the main battle position, until the beginning of April

when the final Japanese offensive began, the Provisional Air Corps Regiment was the only American Infantry in the front line. Although Chemical Warfare and other service personnel who participated in the last few days fighting with the 31st Inf. (U.S.) have been awarded the Combat Infantry Badge, the members of the Provisional Air Corps Regiment have not.

#### LESSONS LEARNED

Troops of other arms are capable of efficient service as defensive infantry if indoctrinated by being placed in a reserve or quiet sector while intensive training is continued, under actual combat conditions.

Troops of all arms and services should be given infantry training against the day when a military emergency, such as Bataan, may necessitate their use.

Inadequate food supplies and disease can be more effective in destroying the physical and morale strength of troops than enemy action.

When food becomes a critical item there should be no differentiation between personnel as there was between the front line troops on Bataan and the garrison on Corregidor.

Defensive forces with no friendly aircraft or anti-aircraft weapons, can be dislodged temporarily, and cannot withdraw by daylight, in the face of enemy air activity.

An outpost force, such as in the Philippines, must be reinforced or lost.

Surrender to an enemy such as the Japanese is certain and slow death for most of the captured personnel.

Be prepared.