

A Close Encounter

The Marine Landing on Tinian

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Table of Contents

The Landing Force: Who, Where, When
Selection of White Beach
General Clifton B. Cates, USMC
Jig Day: Feint and Landing

Napalm: Something New in the Arsenal
The Landing
Tinian Defense Forces
Counterattack
Preparatory Strikes
Aerial Reconnaissance and Photography
The Drive South
Final Days
Medal of Honor Recipients
Aftermath
✕
Sources
Errata

* * * * *

Illustrations

Cover: Following the assault waves, 4th Division Marines wade ashore at Tinian from Coast Guard landing craft against no opposition on the beaches.

1 Amphibian tractors and Higgins boats (LCVPs, landing craft, vehicle and personnel) leave wakes as they land Marines on White Beach 2 and return to assault shipping off shore to load more troops and supplies.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87085]

2 Marianas Islands

3 An oblique photograph of White Beach 1 was taken before naval gunfire, artillery, air bombardment, and bulldozers altered its appearance. This 60-yard beach later became the port of entry for most of V Amphibious Corps' heavy equipment.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 151969]

4 Tinian and Southern Saipan

Showing Japanese Defense Sectors and American Artillery Groupments

5 White Beach 2 accommodated two battalions landing in file, with a single rifle company in the assault. The 25th Marines crossed this 160-yard beach on Jig Day, literally unopposed followed by two light artillery battalions and the 23d Marines.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 150633]

6 Clifton B. Cates

7 Fire Support Sectors for JIG-Minus and JIG-Day

8 Plans for Landing

9 Tinian North, 24–26 July 1944

10 By the time the assault waves landed, most, if not all, Japanese beach defense weapons had been destroyed by the preinvasion bombardments. This Japanese navy-type 25mm machine cannon was knocked out before it could disrupt the landings.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87701]

11 Even enemy weapons, such as this Japanese 120mm type 10 naval dual-purpose gun located not-too-far inland from the invasion beaches, was put out of action, but not before it, and two 6-inch guns, hit the battleship Colorado (BB 45) and destroyer Norman Scott (DD 690) causing casualties before being destroyed.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 91349]

12 Attacking Marines hold up their advance in the face of an exploding Japanese ammunition dump after an attack by Navy planes supporting the drive across Tinian. Note the trees bent over by the force of shock waves caused by the eruption.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87298]

13 Amphibian tractors line up waiting to discharge their Marine passengers on the beach. The almost complete devastation of Japanese beachhead defenses, which was not entirely expected by the Marines, permitted this peaceful combat landing.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 93379]

14 While some Marines were deposited “feet dry” beyond the shoreline of the beaches, others had to land “feet wet” wading ashore in the shallows from the amtracs which brought them in from the attack transports seen in the background.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 88088]

15 Although frontline Marines appreciated the support of the 1st and 2d Provisional Rocket Companies’ truck-mounted 4.5-inch rocket launchers, they always dreaded the period immediately following a barrage. The dust and smoke thrown up at that time served as a perfect aiming point for enemy artillery and mortars which soon followed. Notice the flight of rockets in the upper left hand section of the picture.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 92269]

16 For Tinian, as in the Marshall Islands and the Saipan and Guam operations, DUKWs (amphibian trucks) were loaded with artillery pieces and ammunition at the mount out area. At the objective beaches, they were driven ashore right to the designated gun emplacements enabling the gun crews to get their weapons laid in and firing quickly. Here, an A-frame unloads a 75mm pack howitzer from an Army DUKW.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87645]

17 On the night of 24–25 July, a Japanese counterattack accompanied by tanks failed completely with heavy losses. Here a Marine inspects the enemy dead near a destroyed tank. Note the placement of the bullet holes in the helmets in the ditch.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 91047]

18 A line of skirmishers was the formation normally used at Tinian even where there was no enemy contact. A platoon from the 2d Marines pushes forward while an observation plane (OY) circles overhead. High ground in the distance is part of a long spine extending straight south from Mount Lasso, an objective to be taken.

[Marine Corps Historical Collection]

19 Tinian South, 27 July–1 August 1944

20 Tramping the cane was a tiring work, especially when the direction of

the advance did not parallel the rows of the fields. Each stalk was strong enough to trip a man careless about where he stepped. Advancing through such a field was fraught with danger, also, from hidden trip wires attached to demolitions, and from dug-in Japanese. In addition, the dry cane fields could easily catch fire and trap the Marines.

[Marine Corps Historical Collection]

21 Marines of the 2d Division find some of the most difficult terrain on Tinian as they move up towards the top of Mount Lasso, one of the highest points on the island. Tinian, for the most part, was flat and level, and was under cultivation.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87900]

22 BGen Merritt A. Edson (with binoculars), assistant division commander of the 2d Marine Division, follows the progress of his troops not far from the scene of action. Gen Edson was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism on Guadalcanal.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87824]

23 As a Navy corpsman administers a bottle of plasma to a wounded Marine, the stretcher bearers wait patiently to carry him on board a landing craft which will evacuate him to a hospital ship offshore, where he will be given full treatment.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87434]

24 Some badly wounded casualties died of their severe injuries after having been evacuated from Tinian. Those who succumbed to their wounds were buried at sea.

[Marine Corps Historical Collection]

25 Two Marines escort two apparently healthy, hearty, and willing Japanese prisoners to be turned in at the POW stockade in the rear of the fighting. Most of the prisoners taken on Tinian, however, were civilian workers rather than military men.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 91365]

26 Tank-infantry tactics perfected in prior operations proved successful on Tinian as well. The riflemen served as the eyes of the armored vehicle and would direct the tank crewmen over a telephone mounted in a box on the rear of the tank.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 152074]

27 MajGen Clifton B. Cates, center, visits the command post of 24th Marines commander Col Franklin A. Hart. On the left is LtCol Charles D. Roberts, S-3 of the 24th Marines. Gen Cates would become the 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 143760]

28 Tinian Town was made a shambles because U.S. commanders knew that the enemy was well emplaced, dug in, and expected landings on the beaches fronting the town. As a result, they directed a large share of the pre-Jig Day bombardment into the waterfront and surrounding area, thereby reinforcing Japanese beliefs that this is where the Marines would land.

[Marine Corps Historical Collection]

29 A lone member of the 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division patrolling through the outskirts of Tinian Town, pauses at a torii of a Shinto shrine.

The ruins about him give proof of the heavy shelling visited upon the town before the landing.

[Marine Corps Historical Collection]

30 This cliff was a formidable obstacle to movement on 31 July. Cutting practically across the entire island, it provided problems for both divisions. Here, 2d Division Marines climb the rocky slopes toward the flat plateau on top. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 8th Marines, spent a busy night (31 July–1 August) of the operation holding a road that curled up this slope.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87898]

31 The end of the battle is in sight as troops of the 24th Marines and tanks of the 4th Tank Battalion comb across the coastal plateau at Tinian's extreme southern end. The 23d Marines, whose zone ended at the top of the steep cliff seen in this picture, had to retrace its steps in order to reach the lowlands. Aguijan Island may be seen dimly in the misty background.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 94350]

32 This 75mm pack howitzer, nicknamed "Miss Connie," is firing into a Japanese-held cave from the brink of a sheer cliff in southern Tinian. The gun was locked securely in this unusual position after parts were hand-carried to the cliff's edge.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 94660]

33 In an impromptu command post set up behind his 8th Marines, Col Clarence R. Wallace checks the progress of his frontline troops on a situation map. The overhead poncho provides some protection from Tinian's constant rains.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 87678]

34 It was not long after the initial landing that Marines encountered the civilian population of Tinian. Here Marines bathe a tiny Tinian girl after she and her family had been removed from a hillside dugout. Following the scrubbing, new clothes were found for the children and the entire family was taken to a place of safety in the rear.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 90441]

35 Former Marine Corps Combat Correspondent SSgt Federico Claveria looks at photograph of himself giving an interned Tinian child candy 25 years earlier. Claveria participated in the initial landings on Roi-Namur and Saipan also.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 419222]

36 Top commanders gather for the flagraising on 3 August 1944 at the conclusion of Tinian operations. From left are RAdm Harry W. Hill; MajGen Harry Schmidt; Adm Raymond L. Spruance; LtGen Holland M. Smith; VAdm Richmond Kelly Turner; MajGen Thomas A. Watson; and MajGen Clifton B. Cates.

[Marine Corps Historical Collection]

37 "Japanese Backyard in Tinian Town," by Gail Zumwalt

[Marine Corps Combat Art Collection]

38 The hand salute in its various forms is rendered by those present as the colors are raised over Tinian on 1 August. At the extreme right is VAdm Richmond K. Turner; commander, Expeditionary/Northern Attack Force for the Tinian landings.

[Department of Defense Photo (USMC) 152064]

Photograph:

Following the assault waves, 4th Division Marines waded ashore at Tinian from Coast Guard landing craft against no opposition on the beaches.



Photograph:

Amphibian tractors and Higgins boats (LCVPs, landing craft, vehicle and personnel) leave wakes as they land Marines on White Beach 2 and return to assault shipping off shore to load more troops and supplies.

Three weeks into the battle for Saipan, there was no doubt about the outcome and V Amphibious Corps (VAC) commanders began turning their attention to the next objective—the island of Tinian, clearly visible three miles off Saipan’s southwest coast. Its garrison of 9,000 Japanese army and navy combatants, many of them veterans of the campaigns in Manchuria, had been bombarded for seven weeks by U.S. air and sea armadas, joined in late June by massed Marine Corps and Army artillery battalions on Saipan’s southern coast. The 2d and 4th Marine Divisions, both still in the thick of the Saipan fight, had been selected for the assault mission.

The crucial question of where they would land, however, was still undecided. There was strong support among the planners for a landing on two narrow sand strips—code named White 1 and White 2—on Tinian’s northwest coast; one was 60 yards wide, the other 160. But Vice Admiral Richmond K. Turner, overall commander of the Marianas Expeditionary Force, was skeptical. He leaned toward Yellow Beach, made up of several wide, sandy strips in front of Tinian Town, the island’s heavily fortified administrative and commercial center.

On 3 July, VAC’s Amphibious Reconnaissance Battalion, commanded by Captain James L. Jones, was put on alert for reconnaissance of these potential landing sites. On 9 July, the day Saipan officially was declared secured, Jones got his operation order from Marine Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith, commander of Expeditionary Troops. His men were to scout out the Tinian beaches and their fortifications and determine their capacity to handle the landing force and keep it supplied. Accompanying naval underwater demolition teams would do the hydrographic work and locate underwater obstacles, natural or man-made.

Captain Jones picked for the job Company A under the command of Captain Merwin H. Silverthorn, Jr., the son of a Marine general and World War I veteran, and Company B, commanded by First Lieutenant Leo B. Shinn. The Navy assigned to the mission Underwater (UDT) Team 5, led by Lieutenant Commander Draper L. Kauffman, and UDT Team 7 under Lieutenant Richard F. Burke. They rehearsed the operation on the night of 9–10 July off the beaches of Saipan’s Magicienne Bay. On the evening of the 10th, the Marine and Navy units boarded the destroyer transports GILMER and STRINGHAM for the short trip into the channels separating the two islands.

The teams debarked in rubber boats at 2030, paddled to within 500 yards of the beach and swam to their destinations. Fortunately, it was a black night and although the moon rose at 2230, it was largely obscured by clouds.

Yellow Beach was assigned to Silverthorn’s Company A. He led 20 Marines and eight UDT swimmers ashore. They found a beach near Tinian Town flanked on each side by formidable cliffs. There were many floating mines and underwater boulders in the approaches. On the beach itself, double-apron barbed wire had been strung. Second Lieutenant Donald F. Neff worked his way 30 yards inland to locate exit routes for vehicles. Nearby, talkative Japanese work crews were building pillboxes and trenching with blasting charges. Neff spotted three Japanese sentries on a cliff overlooking the beach; now and then searchlights scanned the beach approaches.

Map:
Marianas Islands

Silverthorn, Burke, and their men made it back to the GILMER safely. Their impression of Yellow Beach as a landing site was distinctly unfavorable.

To the north, at the White Beaches assigned to Company B, things had not gone well. Strong currents pushed the rubber boats off course. The team headed for White 1 was swept 800 yards north of its destination and never got ashore. The party headed for White 2 wound up on White 1 and reconnoitered the area. Both parties were picked up by the GILMER. The next night 10 swimmers from Company A were sent back to reconnoiter White 2 and had a successful trip.

The reports on the White beaches were encouraging. Although the landing areas were very restricted, it was concluded that amphibian tractors (LVTs) and other vehicles could negotiate the reefs and get ashore, and that troops with little difficulty could clamber over the low cliffs flanking the beaches. Marines forced to disembark from boats at the reef could safely wade ashore through the shallow surf. Members of Kauffman’s UDT party confirmed the Marine findings and reported that “no mines or manmade underwater obstructions were found.”

A few hours after the reconnaissance team returned from White 2, Admiral Turner’s objections were withdrawn and a command decision to use the northern beaches was made. On 20 July, a time and date for the landing were fixed: 0730 on 24 July.

Photograph:

An oblique photograph of White Beach 1 was taken before naval gunfire, artillery, air bombardment, and bulldozers altered its appearance. This 60-yard beach later became the port of entry for most of V Amphibious Corps' heavy equipment.

The Landing Force: Who, Where, When.

The task of seizing Tinian was assigned to the two Marine divisions on Saipan—the 2d and the 4th. The third division on the island—the Army's 27th Infantry—would remain on Saipan in reserve. All three had been severely battered during the Saipan campaign, suffering more than 14,000 casualties, including nearly 3,200 dead.

For the 2d Marine Division, the Tinian battle would be the fourth time around in a span of little more than 18 months. The division left Guadalcanal in February 1943, having suffered 1,000 battle casualties. Another 12,500 men had diagnosed cases of malaria. Nine months later—on 20 November 1943—the division had gone through one of the most intense 72 hours of combat in the history of island warfare at Tarawa. It sustained 3,200 casualties, including nearly a thousand dead. Ten weeks before Tarawa, the division was still malaria-ridden, with troops being hospitalized for the disease at the rate of 40 a day. The ranks were filled with gaunt men whose skins were yellowed by daily doses of Atabrine pills. The Saipan operation seven months later, led by division commander Major General Thomas E. Watson, took a heavy toll of these men—5,000 wounded, 1,300 dead.

Watson had earned a reputation at Saipan as a hard-charging leader. When the division stalled fighting its way up Mount Topatchau, he was unimpressed. The historian Ronald Spector wrote, in the midst of that effort, "he was heard shouting over a field telephone, 'There's not a goddamn thing up on that hill but some Japs with machine guns and mortars. Now get the hell up there and get them!'" His assistant division commander was Brigadier General Merritt A. "Red Mike" Edson, who was awarded a Medal of Honor for his heroism on Guadalcanal.

The 4th Division had had a busy, if slightly less demanding, year as well. It went directly into combat after its formation at Camp Pendleton, California, landing on 31 January 1944 in the Marshall Islands where it suffered moderate casualties—fewer than 800 men—in the capture of Roi-Namur. At Saipan its losses reached 6,000, including about 1,000 dead. The Tinian landing would be its third in a little over six months and would be the first under a new divisional commander—Major General Clifton B. Cates, a well-decorated World War I veteran, who would become the 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps in 1948.

Still, "the morale of the troops committed to the Tinian operation was generally high," then-Major Carl W. Hoffman wrote in the official history of the battle. "This fact takes on significance only when it is recalled that the Marines involved had just survived a bitter 25-day struggle and that, with only a fortnight lapse (as distinguished from a fortnight rest), they were again to assault enemy-held shores

... [Their] spirit ... was revealed more in a philosophical shrug, accompanied with a 'here-we-go-again' remark, than in a resentful complaint [at] being called upon again so soon."

The morale of the troops was sustained by the preinvasion fires directed at Tinian. For Jig minus 1 and Jig Day (Jig being the name given to D Day at Tinian), Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill, commander of the Northern Landing Force, had divided the island into five fire support sectors, assigning specific ships to each. His purpose was two-fold: destruction and deception to confuse and deceive the Japanese as to the landing intentions of the Marines.

Tinian Town, under this scheme, got the heaviest pounding the day before the landing—almost 3,000 rounds of 5- to 16-inch shells from the battleships COLORADO, TENNESSEE, and CALIFORNIA, the cruiser CLEVELAND, and seven destroyers: RAMEY, WADLEIGH, NORMAN SCOTT, MONSSEN, WALLER, PRINGLE, and PHILIP. COLORADO had the best day, knocking out with 60 rounds of 16-inch shells the two 6-inch coastal defense guns the Japanese had emplaced on the west coast near Faibus San Hilo Point, guns that easily could have covered the White Beaches.

Firing on the White Beach area itself was minimal for purposes of deception and for lack of suitable targets. The cruiser LOUISVILLE fired 390 rounds into the area before calling it a day.

Map:

Tinian and Southern Saipan

Showing Japanese Defense Sectors and American Artillery Groupments

There was a lot of air activity on the 23d. At three periods during the day, naval gunfire and artillery barrages were halted to allow massive air strikes on railroad junctions, pillboxes, villages, gun emplacements, cane fields, and the beaches at Tinian Town. More than 350 Navy and Army planes took part, dropping 500 bombs, 200 rockets, 42 incendiary clusters, and 34 napalm bombs. This was only the second use of napalm during the Pacific War; napalm bombs were first used on Tinian the day before.

That evening, 37 LSTs at anchor off Saipan were loaded with 4th Marine Division troops. Rations for three days, water and medical supplies, ammunition, vehicles, and other equipment had been preloaded, beginning on 15 July. The troops were going to travel light: a spoon, a pair of socks, insect repellent, and emergency supplies in their pockets, and no pack on their backs.

"Close at hand," the historians Jeter Isely and Philip Crowl wrote in their classic *The U.S. Marines and Amphibious War*, "rode the ships of the two transport divisions that would carry two regiments of the 2d Marine Division on a diversionary feint against Tinian Town and would later disembark them along with the third regiment across the northwestern beaches." (A similar feint was made by 2d Division Marines less than a year later off the southeast beaches of Okinawa, and by the same division lying off Kuwait City nearly 50 years later in the Desert Storm operation).

Photograph:

White Beach 2 accommodated two battalions landing in file, with a single rifle company in the assault. The 25th Marines crossed this 160-yard beach on Jig Day, literally unopposed followed by two light artillery battalions and the 23d Marines.

The 4th was designated the assault division for Tinian. The beaches were not wide enough to accommodate battalions landing abreast, much less divisions. Instead, the assault troops would land by columns—squads, platoons, and companies.

The 2d Division would follow on after taking part in the massive feint off the beaches of Tinian Town, hoping to tie down the main Japanese defense forces and spring the surprise of a landing over the lightly defended northern beaches.

To give the 4th more punch immediately after landing, the 2d was stripped of some of its firepower, such as tank and artillery units. It would, accordingly, be at the lowest strength at Tinian of any Marine division involved in an amphibious operation in World War II.

Despite these additions, the 4th, too, would be understrength—“skinny” was the descriptive word used by Lieutenant Colonel Justice M. “Jumping Joe” Chambers, commander of the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, who was to earn a Medal of Honor in the Iwo Jima operation little more than six months later. The division’s infantry battalions had received only one replacement draft after the Saipan fighting. At full strength they averaged 880 men; at Tinian the average strength was down by more than 35 percent to 565.

For all these reasons—combat fatigue, heavy losses during previous weeks and months, and understrength units—the Marines on Tinian would play a cautious game. Admiral Turner had said he would give them two weeks to seize the island. Major General Harry Schmidt, who relieved Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith as VAC commander, promised to get it done in 10 days. In the event, the island was secured after nine days. In retrospect, analysts say the operation could have been finished off sooner by more aggressive tactics. Time, however, was no great factor; the relatively slow pace of the operation probably kept casualties at a minimum and reduced the probabilities of troop fatigue. Tinian was easy on the eyes, but the heat and humidity were brutal, the cane fields were hard going, and it was the season of monsoons.

Selection of White Beach

[Sidebar (page 3)]

The selection of the northwestern beaches was universally regarded as the key to the quick success of the Tinian operation. The credit for this choice, however, has been debated for years. Carl Hoffman, in his history of the battle, quoted Major General Harry Schmidt on the issue: “Many high ranking officers have asked who originated the plan... While the 4th Division was under my command and prior to the Marianas campaign, my planning

officer, Lieutenant Colonel Evans F. Carlson, made such a plan and probably such a plan was turned in to the V Amphibious Corps.”

The division’s intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel Gooderham L. McCormick, a Reservist who later became mayor of Philadelphia, agreed. So did Lieutenant Victor Maghakian of the division’s reconnaissance unit: “The man who definitely planned that landing ... was Evans F. Carlson... He told me all about that Tinian plan before he was wounded [22 June] on Saipan.”

Others minimized Carlson’s role, including Marine Major General Graves B. Erskine, who was then the V Amphibious Corps chief of staff, and Marine Colonel Robert E. Hogaboom, the operations officer for the landing forces at Saipan and Tinian. Admiral Harry W. Hill, commander of the Northern Attack Force, told Hoffman that “if there were plans and I presume there were tentative ones, none of them were available to me or my staff.”

Hoffman discovered that before the war, students at the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico had come up with the northern beaches solution to the “then-theoretical Tinian solution.”

But historian Ronald Spector, in his Pacific war history, *Eagle Against the Sun*, left no doubt who had forced the issue. It was Marine Lieutenant General Holland M. Smith. When he and Admiral Hill proposed the use of White Beaches 1 and 2, Admiral Turner firmly vetoed [the] proposal and told [Hill] to work on planning for a landing near Tinian Town. Hill reluctantly complied, but he ordered part of his staff to keep working on the White Beaches plan.... [After reconnaissance reports] Hill and Smith tried once again to change Admiral Turner’s mind, but he remained obstinate.

In a characteristic exchange, the admiral told General Smith: “You are not going to land on the White Beaches; I won’t land you there.” “Oh yes you will,” replied the general. “You’ll land me any goddamned place I tell you to.” Turner was adamant: “I’m telling you now it can’t be done. It’s absolutely impossible.” “How do you know it’s impossible?” asked Smith. “You’re just so goddamned scared that some of your boats will be hurt.”

Neither this exchange nor the more subtle efforts of Admiral Hill served to convince Turner, so Hill reluctantly took the matter to Admiral Spruance [Turner’s superior]. Spruance liked the White Beaches idea, but he was reluctant to overrule Turner, his expert on amphibious warfare. A conference with Turner and his subordinate commanders was arranged on board the flagship. All spoke in favor of the White Beaches. Spruance turned to Turner. The latter calmly announced that he favored the White Beaches also.

In a letter written to Hoffman in 1950, Turner said: “...before the reconnaissances of July 10 and 11 were made, I had (without announcement) tentatively decided to accept the White Beaches unless the reconnaissance reports were decidedly unfavorable.”

This was one of those cases, as John F. Kennedy once said, in which “victory has many fathers but defeat is an orphan.”

General Clifton B. Cates, USMC

[Sidebar (page 5)]

Photograph:
Clifton B. Cates

Clifton B. Cates, a native Tennessean, was commissioned in 1917, and was sent to France with the 6th Marines in World War I. He had outstanding service in five major engagements of the war, and returned to the United States a well-decorated young officer after his tour in the occupation of Germany. One of his early assignments following the war was as aide to Major General Commandant George Barnett. During his more than 37 years as a Marine, Cates was one of the few officers who held commands of a platoon, a company, a battalion, a regiment, and a division in combat. He was the 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps at the outset of the Korean War.

His assignments during the interwar years consisted of a combination of schooling, staff assignments, and command, such as his tour as battalion commander in the 4th Marines, then in Shanghai. In 1940, he took command of the Basic School, then in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. He took command of the 1st Marines in May 1942.

In World War II, Cates commanded the 1st Marines in the landing on Guadalcanal. After returning to the States, he was promoted to brigadier general. He went back to the Pacific war in mid-1944 to take command of the 4th Marine Division in time for the Tinian operation. He also led it in the Iwo Jima assault, and was decorated at the end of the fighting with his second Distinguished Service Medal. Part of the citation accompanying the medal reads: "Repeatedly disregarding his own personal safety. Major General Cates traversed his own front lines daily to rally his tired, depleted units and by his undaunted valor, tenacious perseverance, and staunch leadership in the face of overwhelming odds, constantly inspired his stout-hearted Marines to heroic effort during critical phases of the campaign."

On 1 January 1948, General Cates took over as Commandant of the Marine Corps, remaining until 31 December 1951, when he reverted to the three stars of a lieutenant general and began his second tour as Commandant of the Marine Corps Schools at Quantico, Virginia. General Cates retired on 30 June 1954. He died on 4 June 1970.

Jig Day: Feint and Landing

The first troop ships moved out of Saipan's Charan Kanoa harbor at 0330, 24 July. They were the transports KNOX, CALVERT, FULLER, BELL, HEYWOOD, and

JOHN LAND. They were carrying the 2d and 8th Marines (infantry regiments) of the 2d Marine Division on a mission of deception that turned out to be far bloodier than the White Beach landings and far bloodier than anyone had anticipated. They had a muscular escort—the battleship COLORADO, the light cruiser CLEVELAND, and the destroyers RAMEY, NORMAN SCOTT, WADLEIGH, and MONSSEN.

The convoy moved into Sunharon Harbor opposite Tinian Town just before dawn. A few minutes after 0600, the CALVERT began lowering its landing craft and by 0630 all 22 of its boats were in the water. Marines climbed down the cargo nets. Within a half hour, 244 Navy and Army planes began strafing and bombing runs paying particular attention to Tinian Town. Shells and rockets from battleships, heavy and light cruisers, destroyers, and 30 gunboats saturated the beaches. The massed artillery battalions on southern Saipan thundered in with their 105s and 155s.

After a half-hour of this furious bombardment, the LCVPs (landing craft, vehicle and personnel) from CALVERT began their run toward the beach at Tinian Town, receiving heavy artillery and mortar fire from the shore. Admiral Hill, seeking to avoid casualties, ordered the boats to withdraw and reform. A second run started and immediately drew fire from the shore; several boats were sprayed with shell fragments. But they continued on to within 400 yards of the beach before turning back.

While the small boats engaged in this maneuver, the battleship COLORADO came under fire at a range of 3,200 yards from two 6-inch naval guns near Tinian Town, guns that had gone undetected during the weeks of preinvasion surveillance and preparatory fires. Within 15 minutes, the Japanese gunners scored 22 direct hits on COLORADO and six direct hits on the destroyer NORMAN SCOTT, which was attempting to protect the battleship. Casualties among the crews and Marine detachments on the two ships were heavy: 62 killed and 223 wounded. Ten Marines were among the dead, 31 were among the wounded. COLORADO was through for the day and limped off back to Saipan. The Japanese battery survived for four more days until destroyed by the battleship TENNESSEE.

Map:

Tinian and Southern Saipan

Showing Japanese Defense Sectors and American Artillery Groupments

The losses sustained by the two ships exceeded those suffered that day by the Marine landing force on the northwestern beaches. But the feint served its purpose. It froze in place around Tinian Town a whole battalion of the *50th Infantry Regiment* and various elements of the *56th Naval Guard Force*. And it convinced the Japanese commander, Colonel Kiyochi Ogata, that he had thwarted an invasion. His message to Tokyo described how his forces had repelled 100 landing barges.

These “barges” were reloaded on the CALVERT at 1000 and the convoy steamed north to the White Beaches where 4th Division troops had landed after a mishap in their planning. An underwater demolition team using floats carrying explosives swam to White Beach 2 shortly before dawn to blast away boulders and destroy beach mines. The mission failed because of a squall. The floats scattered, the

explosives were lost and a few hours later, Marines paid a price for this aborted mission.

To compensate for the failure of the UDT team, fire support ships lying off the White Beaches—the battleships CALIFORNIA and TENNESSEE, the heavy cruiser LOUISVILLE, and four destroyers—blasted away at the landing areas. Air strikes were then ordered at about 0630 and observers claimed that five of the 14 known beach mines had been destroyed. A battery of 155mm “Long Tom” guns on Saipan fired smokesHELLS at the Japanese command post on Mount Lasso and also laid smoke in the woods and on the bluffs just beyond the beaches to obstruct Japanese observation.

Napalm: Something New in the Arsenal

[Sidebar (page 6)]

Early in 1944, Army Air Corps personnel at Eglin Air Force base near Fort Walton Beach, Florida invented a new weapon. It was a “fire bomb,” first used in combat during the Tinian campaign. The ingredients were diesel oil, gasoline, and a metallic salt from the naphtha used in the manufacture of soap. Mixed with petroleum fuels, the salt created an incendiary jelly that clung to any surface and burned with an extremely hot flame. The concoction was called “napalm.” It could be dropped in wing or belly tanks attached to the underside of an aircraft and was fired by an igniter on contact with the ground.

On 19 July, five days before the Tinian landing. Lieutenant Commander Louis W. Wang, USN, arrived at Saipan carrying a small supply of the “napalm” powder and a film made at Eglin demonstrating the potency of the bomb. It showed P-47s making low-level drops after diving from 2,000 feet.

The demonstration film so impressed Admiral Harry Hill and Major General Harry Schmidt that Hill immediately radioed Admiral Chester Nimitz in Hawaii, requesting 8,599 pounds of the powder. They also ordered trial raids on Tinian by P-47 pilots of the Army’s 318th Air Group, using powder and detonators already on hand. These trials were not particularly impressive. Their purpose was to burn off wooded areas that had previously resisted white phosphorous and thermite. The “napalm” scorched the trees but left the foliage only partially burned. One problem was the wood itself—a virtually indestructible type of ironwood. Another was the napalm mixture. Wang had brought with him the wrong formula. “We tried using Jap aviation gasoline,” according to Colonel Lewis M. Sanders, commander of the fighter group, “but that gave too much fire effect. Then we tried Jap motor gas and oil, with the napalm powder, and it was quite successful.”

The P-47 pilots were uncomfortable with napalm missions. They dropped their tanks at extremely low altitudes—50 feet in some cases—and were highly vulnerable to ground fire. They were also unimpressed with the efficiency of these “fire bombs”; much of their incendiary effect was wasted

in excessive upward flash. Napalm also had a very short burning time—less than two minutes.

Nevertheless, 147 “fire bombs” were used during the Tinian operation, 91 of them containing the napalm mixture. They were most effective in clearing cane fields. As Major General Clifton B. Cates, the 4th Division commander, later recalled: “The first morning they put it down, I went up to the front line and those planes came in over our heads it seemed to me like about a hundred feet in the air ... [They] let go their napalm bombs right over our heads ... maybe two or three hundred yards in front of us. It was a very devastating thing and particularly to the morale of the Japanese... I didn’t feel too comfortable sitting up there ... I figured that some of them might drop short.”

Each bomb cleared an area approximately 75 by 200 feet and, in some cases, left behind the charred bodies of Japanese troops. The Marines were impressed. Infantry commanders sought napalm for their flamethrower tanks. It was used widely in 1944 in support of ground troops in the Philippines. On one operation on Luzon, 238 fighters saturated an area with napalm: “The usually stoic [Japanese],” an Air Force historian recorded, “seemingly lost all caution and fled into the open, [becoming] easy targets for other forms of attack.”

Napalm was used effectively in the fire bombing of Japanese cities. It was also used in preinvasion efforts to soften up the defenses of Iwo Jima. Beginning on 31 January 1945, Liberator bombers of the Seventh Air Force began 16 days of daytime sorties against the island in which 602 tons of bombs were dropped and 1,111 drums of napalm were used in an unproductive effort to burn off camouflage from defensive positions and gun emplacements. A Marine intelligence officer is quoted in the official Air Force history of operations over Iwo Jima as saying that “the chief effect of the long bombardment of Iwo was to cause the enemy to build more elaborate underground defenses.”

The Landing

The assault plan assigned White Beach 1 to the 24th Marines and White Beach Two to the 25th. In the vanguard for the 24th was Company E of the 2d Battalion—200 men commanded by Captain Jack F. Ross, Jr. Company A of the 1st Battalion, commanded by Captain Irving Schechter, followed and by 0820 the entire 2d Battalion, commanded by Major Frank A. Garretson, was ashore.

Almost simultaneously, two battalions of the 25th Marines loaded into 16 LVTs landed in columns of companies on White Beach 2. The 2d Battalion under Lieutenant Colonel Lewis C. Hudson, Jr., was on the right; the 3d Battalion (Lieutenant Colonel Chambers) was on the left.

The units of the 24th, loaded into 24 LVTs, crossed the line of departure—3,000 yards offshore—at 0717. Ahead of them, 30 LCIs (landing craft, infantry) and a

company of the 2d Armored Amphibian Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Reed M. Fawell, Jr., raked the beaches with barrage rockets and automatic cannon fire. On the 26-minute run to the beach, the troop-laden LVTs took scattered and ineffectual rifle and machine gun fire.

At White 1, members of a small Japanese beach detachment, holed up in caves and crevices, resisted the landing with intense small arms fire. But they were silenced quickly by Company E gunners.

Within an hour, the entire 1st and 2d Battalions of the 24th were ashore on White 1, preparing to move inland. The 2d Battalion encountered sporadic artillery, mortar, and small arms fire during the first 200 yards of its advance. After that, Garretson later said, the battalion had a “cake walk” for the rest of the day gaining 1,400 yards and reaching its O-1 line objective by 1600. He occupied the western edge of Airfield No. 3 and cut the main road linking Airfield No. 1 with the east coast and southern Tinian. Only occasional small arms fire was encountered before the battalion dug in for the night.

Map:
Plans for Landing

On Garretson’s left, the 1st Battalion, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Otto Lessing, was slowed by heavy fires from cave positions and patches of heavy vegetation. Flamethrower tanks were sent up against these positions, but the Japanese held on. As a result, Lessing pulled up late in the afternoon 400 yards short of his objective. This left a gap between his perimeter and Garretson’s. To fill it, the regiment’s 3d Battalion, waiting in reserve at the beach, was called up.

Almost simultaneously, the 25th ran into problems. The beach and surrounding area had been methodically seeded with mines which neither UDT teams nor offshore gunners had been able to destroy. It took six hours to clear them out and in the process three LVTs and a jeep were blown up. The beach defenses also included a sprinkling of booby traps which had to be dealt with—watches and cases of beer, for example, all wired to explode in the hands of careless souvenir hunters.

Behind the beach, troops from Ogata’s *50th Regiment* put up a vigorous defense with mortars, anti-tank and anti-boat guns, and other automatic weapons emplaced in pillboxes, caves, fortified ravines, and field entrenchments. Two 47mm guns in particular kept the Marines back on their heels. They finally bypassed these troublesome positions. Later waves took them out, leaving 50 dead Japanese in the gunpits.

The 3d Battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel Chambers, later remembered a lot of confusion on the beach, “the confusion you [always] get when you land, of getting the organization together again.” One of his company commanders, for example, was killed a half-hour after landing and it took a while to get a replacement on scene and up to speed. Then there was the problem of the mines and a problem with artillery fire from the Japanese command post on Mount Lasso, two-and-a-half miles away.

By late afternoon, Chambers’ battalion had reached its objective 1,500 yards inland in the center of the line and had tied in on its left flank with Garretson of

the 24th. The other battalions of the 25th came up short of their O-1 line, creating before sundown a crescent-shaped beachhead 3,000 yards wide at the shoreline and bulging inland to a maximum depth of 1,500 yards.

The day's greatest confusion surrounded the landing of the 23d Marines. The regiment had been held on LSTs (landing ships, tank) in division reserve during the landing of the 24th and 25th. At 0730, the troops were ordered below to board LVTs parked cheek to jowl on the tank decks. Their engines were running, spewing forth carbon monoxide. Experience had shown that troops cooped up under these conditions for more than 30 minutes would develop severe headaches, become nauseous, and begin vomiting.

To avoid that problem and in the absence of a launch order, the regimental commander, Colonel Louis R. Jones, soon unloaded his men and sent them topside. They returned to the tank decks at 1030 when an order to load and launch finally was received. The regiment debarked and eventually got ashore beginning at 1400 despite an incredible series of communication breakdowns in which Jones at crucial times was out of touch with the division and his battalions.

In addition to botched radio communications, Jones was stuck in an LVT with a bad engine; it took him seven hours to get ashore with his staff, leading to a division complaint about the tardiness of his regiment. The division noted that "fortunately no serious harm was done by [the] delay," but at the end of the operation Jones left the division. He was promoted to brigadier general and assigned as assistant division commander of the 1st Marine Division for the Okinawa landings.

A similar muck-up occurred involving the 2d Marine Division. After the feint at Tinian Town, the division sailed north and lay offshore of the White Beaches through the day. At 1515, the landing force commander, Major General Harry Schmidt, ordered a battalion from the 8th Marines to land at White Beach to back up the 24th Marines. Schmidt wanted the battalion ashore at 1600. Because of communication and transport confusion the deadline was missed. It was 2000 when the unit entered in its log "...dug in in assigned position."

Map:

Tinian North, 24-26 July 1944

On the other hand, the big things had gone well in the morning and afternoon. By the standards of Tarawa and Saipan, casualties were light—15 dead, 225 wounded. The body count for the Japanese was 438. Despite drizzling rain, narrow beaches, and undiscovered mines, 15,600 troops were put ashore along with great quantities of materiel and equipment that included four battalions of artillery, two dozen half-tracks mounting 75mm guns, and 48 medium and 15 flame-throwing tanks which found the Tinian terrain hospitable for tank operations. The tanks had gotten into action early that morning, leading the 24th in tank-infantry attacks. They also had come to the aid of the 23d Marines as that regiment moved inland to take over the division's right flank. The beachhead itself was of respectable size, despite the failure of some units to reach their first-day objectives. It extended inland nearly a mile and embraced defensible territory. On the whole, it had not been a bad day's work.

Tinian Defense Forces

[Sidebar (page 9)]

Japanese military fortification of Tinian and other islands in the chain had begun—in violation of the League of Nations Mandate—in the 1930s. By 1944, the Tinian garrison numbered roughly 9,000 army and navy personnel, bringing the island's total population to nearly 25,000.

The *50th Infantry Regiment*, detached from the *29th Division* on Guam, was the principal fighting force. It had been stationed near Mukden, Manchuria, from 1941 until its transfer in March 1944 to Tinian. Many of its troops were veterans of the Manchurian campaigns. The regiment was commanded by Colonel Kiyoshi [also spelled “Keishi”] Ogata and consisted of three 880-man infantry battalions, a 75mm mountain artillery battalion equipped with 12 guns, engineer, communication, and medical companies, plus a headquarters and various specialized support units, including a company of 12 light tanks and an anti-tank platoon. He also had a battalion of the *135th Infantry Regiment* with a strength of about 900 men. Altogether, slightly more than 5,000 army troops were assigned to the island's defense.

The principal navy unit was the *56th Naval Guard Force*, a 1,400-man coastal defense unit, supplemented by four construction battalions with a combined strength of 1,800 men. Other naval units, totaling about 1,000 men, included ground elements of seven aviation squadrons and a detachment of the *5th Base Force*.

The navy personnel—about 4,200 altogether—were under the immediate command of Captain Oichi Oya. Both Oya and Ogata were outranked on the island by Vice Admiral Kakuji Kakuda, commander of the *1st Air Fleet* with headquarters on Tinian. But Kakuda, as the invasion neared, had no air fleet to command. Of the estimated 107 planes based at Tinian's air fields, 70 had been destroyed on the ground early in June by U.S. air strikes. By the time of the Tinian landing on 24 July, none of Kakuda's planes were operative.

Kakuda had a bad reputation. He was, by Japanese physical standards, a hulking figure: more than six feet tall, weighing more than 200 pounds. “He willingly catered,” Hoffman wrote, “to his almost unquenchable thirst for liquor; he lacked the fortitude to face the odds arrayed against him at Tinian.” Historian Frank Hough called him “a drunk and an exceedingly unpleasant one, from all accounts.”

On 15 July, nine days before the invasion, Kakuda and his headquarters group attempted to escape via rubber boats to Aguijan Island where they hoped to rendezvous with a Japanese submarine. This effort failed. He tried again on five successive nights with the same results, finally abandoning the effort on 21 July. He fled with his party from Tinian Town to a cave on Tinian's east coast where they awaited their fate. A Japanese prisoner who described Kakuda's escape efforts assumed he had committed suicide after

the American landing, but this was never verified. Toward the end of the battle for Tinian, one of Kakuda's orderlies led an American patrol to the cave. The patrol was fired upon and two Marines were wounded. A passing group of Marine pioneers sealed the cave with demolition charges but it is unknown whether Kakuda was inside.

Admiral Kakuda in any case took no part in directing the Japanese resistance. For purposes of defending the island, command of both army and navy forces was assumed by Colonel Ogata, but co-operation between the two service branches was less than complete. Frictions were reflected in diaries found among the Japanese documents captured on Tinian. A soldier in the *50th Regiment's* artillery battalion wrote:

9 March—The Navy stays in barracks buildings and has liberty every night with liquor to drink and makes a big row.

We, on the other hand, bivouac in the rain and never get out on pass. What a difference in discipline!

12 June—Our AA guns [manned by the Navy] spread black smoke where the enemy planes weren't. Not one hit out of a thousand shots. The Naval Air Group has taken to its heels.

15 June—The naval aviators are robbers... When they ran off to the mountains, they stole Army provisions...

The defenses of Tinian were dictated by the geography of the island. It is encircled by coral cliffs which rise from the coastline and are a part of the limestone plateau underlying the island. These cliffs range in height from 6 to 100 feet; breaks in the cliff line are rare and where they occur are narrow, leaving little beach space for an invasion force. Along the entire coastline of Tinian, only four beaches were worthy of the name.

The largest and most suitable for use by an amphibious force was in front of Tinian Town in Suharon Harbor. It consisted of several wide, sandy strips. The harbor was mediocre but provided in fair weather limited anchorage for a few ships which could load and unload cargo at two piers available at Tinian Town.

From the beginning, Colonel Ogata assumed that this beach would be the first choice of the Americans. Of the roughly 100 guns in fixed positions on the island—ranging from 7.7mm heavy machine guns to 6-inch British naval rifles—nearly a third were assigned to the defense of Tinian Town and its beaches and to the airfield at Gurguan Point, two-and-a-half miles northwest of the town. Within a two-mile radius of the town were the *2d Battalion* of the *50th Infantry Regiment*, 1,400 men of the *56th Naval Guard Force*, a tank company of the *18th Infantry Regiment*, and the *1st Battalion, 135th Infantry Regiment*, which had been designated as the mobile counterattack force.

Their area of responsibility extended to Laslo Point, the southernmost part of the island and, on the east, to Masalog Point. It was designated the "Southern Sector" in Ogata's defense plan.

The remainder of the island was divided into northeastern and northwestern sectors. The northeastern sector included the Ushi Point airfields and a potential landing beach 125 yards wide south of Asiga Point

on the east coast of the island. In this sector, between 600 and 1,000 navy personnel were stationed around the Ushi Airfields. The *2d Battalion* of the *50th Infantry Regiment*, along with an engineer group, was stationed inland of Asagi Point. The northwestern sector contained two narrow strips of beach 1,000 yards apart. One of them was 60 yards wide and the other about 160. They were popular with Japanese civilians. The sand was white and the water was swimmable. They were known locally as the White Beaches and that is what they were called when they were chosen—to the great surprise of the Japanese—as the American invasion route.

This sector was defended very modestly by a single company of infantry, an antitank squad, and, about 500 yards northeast of the White Beaches, gun crews situated in emplacements containing one 37mm antitank gun, one 47mm antitank gun, and two 7.7mm machine guns.

Ogata established his command post in a cave on Mount Lasso in the center of the northern region, roughly equidistant—a little over two miles—from beaches on either side of the island.

He issued on 25 June an operation order saying “the enemy on Saipan can be expected to be planning a landing on Tinian. The area of that landing is estimated to be either Tinian Harbor or Asiga Harbor [on the northeast coast].” Three days later he followed up with a “Defense Force Battle Plan” which outlined only two contingencies:

(A) In the event the enemy lands at Tinian Harbor.

(B) In the event the enemy lands at Asiga Bay.

On 7 July Ogata issued a “Plan for the Guidance of Battle” ordering his men to be prepared not only for landings at Tinian Town and Asiga Bay, but also for a counterattack in the event the Americans were to invade across the White Beaches.

In each of the three sectors, according to his battle plan, commanders were to be prepared to “destroy the enemy at the beach, but [also] be prepared to shift two-thirds of the force elsewhere.” His reserve force was to “maintain fortified positions, counterattack points [and] maintain anti-aircraft observation and fire in its area.” The “Mobile Counterattack Force” must “advance rapidly to the place of landings, depending on the situation and attack.” In the event of successful landings his forces would “counterattack to the water and ... destroy the enemy on beaches with one blow, especially where time prevents quick movement of forces within the island.” If things were to go badly, “we will gradually fall back on our prepared positions in the southern part of the island and defend them to the last man.”

Some of these orders were contradictory and others were impossible of execution. But despite the odds against them—bereft of air or sea support and confronted by three heavily armed divisions only three miles away on Saipan—the fighting spirit of the Japanese forces had not been broken by 43 days of the heaviest bombardment, up to then, of the Pacific war. One of the men of the *50th Infantry Regiment* wrote in his diary on 30 June: “We have spent twenty days under unceasing enemy bombardment and air raids but have suffered only minor losses. Everyone from the Commanding Officer to

the lowest private is full of fighting spirit.” His entry for 19 July, five days before the American landings, was upbeat: “How exalted are the gallant figures of the Force Commander, the Battalion Commander, and their subordinates, who have endured the violent artillery and air bombardment.”

Counterattack

At about 1630, the 4th Division commander, General Cates, ordered his forces to button up for the night. A nighttime counterattack was expected. Barbed wire, preloaded on amphibian vehicles (DUKWs), was strung all along the division front. Ammunition was stacked at every weapons position. Machine guns were emplaced to permit interlocking fields of fire. Target areas were assigned to mortar crews. Artillery batteries in the rear were registered to hit probable enemy approach routes and to fire illuminating shells if a lighted battlefield was required. Of great importance, as it turned out, was the positioning up front of 37mm guns and cannister ammunition (antipersonnel shells which fired large pellets for close-in fighting); in the night fighting that followed, they inflicted severe losses on the enemy.

As the troops dug in to await whatever the night would bring, the 24th Marines, backed up by the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines, occupied the northern half of the defensive crescent. The 25th and a battalion of the 23d occupied the southern half of the crescent with the remainder of the 23d in reserve. On the beaches in the rear, artillery battalions from the 10th and 14th Marines, engineer battalions, and other special troops were on alert.

Photograph:

By the time the assault waves landed, most, if not all, Japanese beach defense weapons had been destroyed by the preinvasion bombardments. This Japanese navy-type 25mm machine cannon was knocked out before it could disrupt the landings.

The Japanese, meanwhile, were preparing for their counterattack. Because of shattered communications lines, it could not be a coordinated operation. Units would act on their own under Colonel Ogata’s general order of 28 June to “destroy the enemy on beaches with one blow, especially where time prevents quick movement of forces within the island.”

Photograph:

Even enemy weapons, such as this Japanese 120mm type 10 naval dual-purpose gun located not-too-far inland from the invasion beaches, was put out of action, but not before it, and two 6-inch guns, hit the battleship

COLORADO (BB 45) and destroyer NORMAN SCOTT (DD 690) causing casualties before being destroyed.

They had on the left or northern flank of the Marine lines 600 to 1,000 naval troops at the Ushi Point airfields. Near Mount Lasso, opposite the center of the Marine lines, were two battalions of the *50th Infantry Regiment* and a tank company, about 1,500 men all told. On the west coast, facing the Marine right flank, were about 250 men from an infantry company of the 50th Regiment, a tank detachment and an anti-tank squad.

Photograph:

Attacking Marines hold up their advance in the face of an exploding Japanese ammunition dump after an attack by Navy planes supporting the drive across Tinian. Note the trees bent over by the force of shock waves caused by the eruption.

South of Mount Lasso, nearly six miles from the White Beaches, was the Japanese *Mobile Counterattack Force*—a 900-man battalion of the *135th Infantry Regiment*, equipped with new rifles and demolition charges. Its journey toward the northwestern beaches and the Marine lines was perilous. All movements in daylight were under air surveillance and vulnerable to American fire power. But the battalion set out under its commander—a Captain Izumi—and was hit on several occasions by unobserved artillery and naval gunfire. Izumi pushed on and got to his objective through skillful use of terrain for concealment. At 2230 he began probing the center of the Marine line where the 2d Battalion, 24th Marines under Garretson was tied in with the 3d Battalion under Chambers.

“While most of these Japanese crept along just forward of the lines,” Carl Hoffman wrote, “...a two-man reconnaissance detail climbed up on a battered building forward of the 24th Marines and audaciously (or stupidly) commenced jotting notes about, or drawing sketches of, the front lines. This impudent gesture was rewarded with a thundering concentration of U.S. artillery fire.”

Photograph:

Amphibian tractors line up waiting to discharge their Marine passengers on the beach. The almost complete devastation of Japanese beachhead defenses, which was not entirely expected by the Marines, permitted this peaceful combat landing.

Photograph:

While some Marines were deposited “feet dry” beyond the shoreline of the beaches, others had to land “feet wet” wading ashore in the shallows from the amtracs which brought them in from the attack transports seen in the background.

Photograph:

Although frontline Marines appreciated the support of the 1st and 2d Provisional Rocket Companies' truck-mounted 4.5-inch rocket launchers, they always dreaded the period immediately following a barrage. The dust and smoke thrown up at that time served as a perfect aiming point for enemy artillery and mortars which soon followed. Notice the flight of rockets in the upper left hand section of the picture.

Chambers had a vivid memory of that night:

There was a big gully that ran from the southeast to northwest and right into the western edge of our area. Anybody in their right mind could have figured that if there was to be any counterattacks, that gully would be used...

During the night ... my men were reporting that they were hearing a lot of Japanese chattering down in the gully... They hit us about midnight in K company's area. They hauled by hand a couple of 75mm howitzers with them and when they got them up to where they could fire at us, they hit us very hard. I think K company did a pretty damn good job but ... about 150, 200 Japs managed to push through [the 1,500 yards] to the beach area...

When the Japs hit the rear areas, all the artillery and machine guns started shooting like hell. Their fire was coming from the rear and grazing right up over our heads... In the meantime, the enemy that hit L company was putting up a hell of a fight within 75 yards of where I was and there wasn't a damn thing I could do about it.

Over in K company's area ... was where the attack really developed. That's where [Lt.] Mickey McGuire ... had his 37mm guns on the left flank and was firing cannister. Two of my men were manning a machine gun [Cpl Alfred J. Daigle and Pfc Orville H. Showers]... These two lads laid out in front of their machine gun a cone of Jap bodies. There was a dead Jap officer in with them. Both of the boys were dead.

Photograph:

For Tinian, as in the Marshall Islands and the Saipan and Guam operations, DUKWs (amphibian trucks) were loaded with artillery pieces and ammunition at the mount out area. At the objective beaches, they were driven ashore right to the designated gun emplacements enabling the gun crews to get their weapons laid in and firing quickly. Here, an A-frame unloads a 75mm pack howitzer from an Army DUKW.

A Marine combat correspondent, described this action:

[Showers and Daigle] held their fire until the Japanese were 100 yards away, then opened up. The Japanese charged, screaming, "Banzai," firing light machine guns and throwing hand grenades. It seemed impossible that the two Marines—far ahead of their own lines—could hold on... The next morning they were found slumped over their weapons, dead. No less than 251 Japanese bodies were piled in front of them... The Navy Cross was awarded posthumously to Daigle and the Silver Star posthumously to Showers.

Just before daybreak, Chambers recalled, two tank companies showed up, commanded by Major Robert I. Neiman. They “wanted to get right at the enemy” and Chambers sent them off to an area held by Companies K and L. Neiman returned in about a half hour and said, “You don’t need tanks. You need undertakers. I never saw so many dead Japs.”

Photograph:

On the night of 24–25 July, a Japanese counterattack accompanied by tanks failed completely with heavy losses. Here a Marine inspects the enemy dead near a destroyed tank. Note the placement of the bullet holes in the helmets in the ditch.

Another large contingent of Japanese troops was “stacked up” by the 75mm pack howitzer gunners of Battery D of the 14th Marines, supported by the .50-caliber machine guns of Batteries E and F: “They literally tore the Japanese ... to pieces.” Altogether about 600 Japanese were killed in their attack on the center.

On the left flank, 1st Battalion, 24th Marines, came under attack at 0200 from about 600 *Special Naval Landing Force* troops out of the barracks at the Ushi Point airfields. Company A, hit so hard it was reduced at one point to only 30 men with weapons, was forced to draw reinforcements from engineers, corpsmen, communicators, and members of the shore party. Illumination flares were fired over the battlefield, allowing the Marines to use 37mm cannister shells, machine gun fire, and mortars to good effect. The fight continued until dawn when medium tanks from the 4th Tank Battalion lumbered in to break up the last attacking groups. At that point, many Japanese began using their grenades to commit suicide.

As the sun rose, 476 Japanese bodies were counted in this sector of the defensive crescent, most of them in front of the Company A position.

The last enemy attack that night hit the right or southern flank of the Marines beginning at 0330 when six Japanese tanks (half of the Japanese tank force on Tinian) clattered up from the direction of Tinian Town to attack the 23d Marines position. They were met by fire from Marine artillery, anti-tank guns, bazookas, and small arms. Lieutenant Jim Lucas, a professional reporter who enlisted in the Marine Corps shortly after the attack on Pearl Harbor and was commissioned in the field, was there:

The three lead tanks broke through our wall of fire. One began to glow blood-red, turned crazily on its tracks and careened into a ditch. A second, mortally wounded, turned its machine guns on its tormentors, firing into the ditches in a last desperate effort to fight its way free. One hundred yards more and it stopped dead in its tracks. The third tried frantically to turn and then retreat, but our men closed in, literally blasting it apart.... Bazookas knocked out a fourth tank with a direct hit which killed the driver. The rest of the crew piled out of the turret screaming. The fifth tank, completely surrounded, attempted to flee. Bazookas made short work of it. Another hit set it afire and its crew was cremated.

The sixth tank was chased off, according to Colonel Jones, by a Marine driving a jeep. Some appraisers of this action believe only five tanks were involved. In any case, the destruction of these tanks did not end the fight on the right flank.

Infantry units of the 50th Regiment continued to attack in the zone of 2d Battalion, 23d Marines. They were repulsed and killed in great numbers, largely through the effective use of 37mm anti-tank guns using cannister shot. In “the last hopeless moments of the assault,” Hoffman wrote, “some of the wounded Japanese destroyed themselves by detonating a magnetic tank mine which produced a terrific blast.”

Photograph:

A line of skirmishers was the formation normally used at Tinian even where there was no enemy contact. A platoon from the 2d Marines pushes forward while an observation plane (OY) circles overhead. High ground in the distance is part of a long spine extending straight south from Mount Lasso, an objective to be taken.

From the Japanese standpoint, the night’s work had been a disaster: 1,241 bodies left on the battlefield; several hundred more may have been carted away during the night. Fewer than 100 Marines were wounded or killed. “The loss of these [Japanese] troops,” the historian Frank Hough has written:

...broke the back of the defense of Tinian. With their communications shattered by sustained fire from Saipan and increasing fire from Tinian itself ... the survivors were capable of only the weakest, most dazed sort of resistance... Now and again during the next seven days, small groups took advantage of the darkness to [launch night attacks], but for the most part they simply withdrew in no particular order until there remained nowhere to withdraw.

That was a common judgment after the Tinian battle had ended. But at the time, according to the 4th Division intelligence officer, Lieutenant Colonel Gooderham McCormick, a Marine Reserve officer who later became mayor of Philadelphia, things were not so clear: “We still believed [after the counterattack] the enemy capable of a harder fight ... and from day to day during our advance expected a bitter fight that never materialized.”

Nevertheless, a lot of hard work lay ahead. One of the most demanding tasks was the simple but exhausting job of humping through cane fields in terrific heat, humidity, and frequent monsoon downpours, fearful not only of sniper fire, mines, or booby traps, but fearful as well of fires that could sweep through the cane fields, incinerating anyone in their path.

Preparatory Strikes

[Sidebar (page 12)]

No battle in the Pacific was a “piece of cake.” But there was less apprehension among the Americans about the outcome at Tinian than in any major operation of the war. Admiral Raymond A. Spruance later described it as “probably the most brilliantly conceived and executed amphibious operation of World War II.” Lieutenant General Holland M.

Smith, commander of the Expeditionary Troops during the seizure of the Marianas, called it “the perfect amphibious operation.”

It took place under optimal conditions for success. The small Japanese garrison on the island had no hope of relief, resupply, escape, or victory. Three miles away, across the narrow Saipan Channel, three battle-tested American divisions—more than 50,000 men—were available for the inevitable invasion. For seven weeks the bombardment from U.S. air and sea armadas, joined by the big guns on Saipan, had been relentless, day and night.

The effect on Tinian’s civilian inhabitants was recorded by James L. Underhill, later a Marine lieutenant general, who became the island’s military commander at the end of the battle:

The state of these people was indescribable. They came in with no possessions except the rags on their backs. They had been under a two-month intense bombardment and shelling and many were suffering from shell shock... They had existed on very scant rations for six weeks and for the past week had had practically nothing to eat. They had been cut off from their own water supply for a week and had caught what rainwater they could in bowls and cans. Hundreds of them were wounded and some of their wounds were gangrenous. Beri beri, syphilis, pneumonia, dysentery, and tuberculosis were common. [They needed] shelter, food, water, clothing, medical care, and sanitation.

The bombardment began on 11 June—four days before the Saipan invasion—when carrier planes from Vice Admiral Marc A. Mitscher’s Task Force 58 launched a three-and-a-half day pummeling of all the principal Mariana Islands. A fighter sweep on the first day, carried out by 225 Grumman Hellcats, destroyed about 150 Japanese aircraft and ensured American control of the skies over the islands.

Following the raid, a member of the Japanese garrison on Saipan, wrote in his diary: “For two hours, enemy planes ran amuck and finally left leisurely amidst the unparalleledly inaccurate anti-aircraft fire. All we could do was watch helplessly.”

Over the next two days, bombers hit the islands and shipping in the area with no letup. There was a fatalistic diary entry by one of the Tinian troops: “Now begins our cave life.” Another soldier wrote of the ineffectual anti-aircraft fire—“not one hit out of a thousand shots”—and reported that “the Naval Air Group has taken to its heels.” Yet another diarist was indignant, too: “The naval aviators are robbers... When they ran off to the mountains they stole Army provisions.”

Fast battleships from Task Force 58 joined the bombardment from long range on 13 June. Their fires, analysts later said, were “ineffective” and “misdirected” at soft targets rather than at the concealed gun positions ringing the island. But, as an element in the cumulative psychological and physical toll on soldiers and civilians alike, harassing fires of this nature were not inconsiderable.

Over the next six weeks, the effort to degrade and destroy the defenses and garrison of Tinian escalated. On 18 June, Navy Task Force 52,

commanded by Rear Admiral Richmond K. Turner, added its guns to the mission. Air strikes involving carrier planes and Army P-47s were ordered. From 28 June until the Tinian landing on 24 July, massed artillery battalions, firing from Saipan's southern shore, poured thousands of tons of steel into the island. By mid-July, 13 battalions were engaged in the mission, firing 160 guns—105s and Long Tom 155s—around the clock. The six battalions of the XXIV Corps Artillery alone undertook 1,509 fire missions in that period, firing 24,536 rounds.

The precise effect of the artillery fires from Saipan will never be known, but it is reasonable to assume there were many scenes of the kind retired Brigadier General Frederick Karch described in his oral history memoir. He was a young major, serving as operations officer for an artillery regiment—the 14th Marines—during the Tinian campaign, and he recalled:

I remember going by a [Japanese] machine gun crew. They had been trying to get to a firing position and had been caught by the artillery barrage, apparently, and they were laid out just like a school solution, with each man carrying his particular portion of the gun crew's equipment. And that was where they had died in a very fine situation, except they were on the wrong side of the barrage.

During the two weeks from 26 June to 9 July, the cruisers INDIANAPOLIS, BIRMINGHAM, and MONTPELIER hit the island daily. Their fires were supplemented in the week preceding Jig Day (the D-day designation for Tinian) by the battleships COLORADO, TENNESSEE, and CALIFORNIA; the cruisers LOUISVILLE, CLEVELAND, and NEW ORLEANS; 16 destroyers; and dozens of supporting vessels firing a variety of ordnance ranging from white phosphorous aimed at wooded areas around the Japanese command post on Mount Lasso to 40mm fire and rocket barrages by LCIs (landing craft, infantry) directed at caves and other close-in targets.

Aerial Reconnaissance and Photography

[Sidebar (page 18)]

In the months leading up to the invasion, intensive reconnaissance was undertaken. The first aerial photos of 1944 had been acquired back in February when U.S. carrier planes attacked Saipan. Others were obtained in April and May by photo planes based at Eniwetok. These early photographs were of little use to invasion planners. Their quality was poor and many were taken at angles that distorted the terrain.

These inadequacies hampered the Saipan planners but Tinian was another story. "Perhaps no other Pacific island..." Marine Corps analysts later concluded, "became so familiar to the assault forces because of thorough and accurate [photography and] mapping prior to the landings."

A lot of the familiarization came from first-hand observation by division, regimental, and battalion commanders who used observation planes to conduct their own reconnaissance of the Tinian beaches and inland terrain.

Lieutenant Colonel Justice M. Chambers, commander of the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, described his preinvasion visit to the island:

There was a lieutenant commander Muller, a naval aviator, who apparently had a set of roving orders. He had brought his flight of three Liberators to Saipan... I thought it would be a good idea to take my company commanders and overfly the beaches that we're going to use... So the 3rd Battalion group took the flight and practically all the battalions did the same.

We took off from Saipan and of course the minute you were airborne you were over Tinian. I had talked it over with Muller and told him that the last beach we would overfly would be the one we were going to hit. I said, "Let's take a look at a lot of other beaches first and fly over the interior." We made passes at several beaches. I was standing up in a blister where I could see and my officers had the bomb bays open and were looking down. We flew around maybe 20 or 30 minutes, and then we made a big loop and came back over the beaches we were going to land on. I'm glad we did because we spotted ... mines in the water which the Navy got out.

We zoomed in on Mount Lasso, which was the only mountain on Tinian. The island was just one big cane field, and Mount Lasso was directly ahead of our beaches. Muller started pulling out and I began to see white things zipping by outside the plane... I was fighting to keep my stomach down because a fast elevator is too much for me. I asked: "What's that?" He replied, "Twenty millimeter. Where do you want to go now?" I said, "Saipan. There are no foxholes up here."

The photographic coverage of Tinian, along with prisoners and documents captured at Saipan, and other intelligence available to U.S. commanders, made them, according to the official history, "almost as familiar with the Japanese strength at Tinian as was Colonel Ogata [the Japanese commander]."

The Drive South

Lieutenant Colonel William W. "Bucky" Buchanan was the assistant naval gunfire officer for the 4th Division at Tinian. His career later took him to Vietnam. After his retirement as a brigadier general he recalled the Tinian campaign:

We used the same tactics on Tinian that we did on Saipan: that is, a hand-holding, linear operation, like a bunch of brush-beaters, people shooting grouse or something, the idea being to flush out every man consistently as we go down, rather than driving down the main road with a fork and cutting this off and cutting this off in what I call creative tactics, you see. But this was the easiest thing and the safest thing to do. And who can criticize it? It was successful. Here, again, what little resistance was left was pushed into the end of the island ... and quickly collapsed.

The grouse-shooting metaphor is simplistic but even the 4th Division commander, Major General Clifton B. Cates, thought the campaign had its sporting aspects: “The fighting was different from most any that we had experienced because it was good terrain... It was a good clean operation and I think the men really enjoyed it.”

Before the “brush beating” could begin in proper order, three things needed to be achieved. First, the 2d Marine Division had to be put ashore. This task was completed on the morning of 26 July—Jig plus 2.

Map:

Tinian South, 27 July–1 August 1944

Second, Japanese stragglers and pockets of resistance in the island’s northern sector had to be squashed. That job, for all practical purposes, was pretty well completed on the 26th as the 2d Division swept across the Ushi Point airfields, reached the east coast, and made a turn to the south. (Two days later, Seabees had the Ushi Point fields in operation for Army P-47 Thunderbolt fighters). Also on the 26th, the 4th Division had seized Mount Maga in the center of the island and had forced Colonel Ogata and his staff to abandon their command post on Mount Lasso which fell to the Marines without a struggle.

The third objective—to create for the drive south a skirmish line of infantry and tanks stretching all the way across the island—was also accomplished on the 26th. The 4th Division lined up in the western half of the island with the 23d Marines on the coast, the 24th in the center, and the 25th on the left flank. The 2d Division lined up with the 2d Marines on the east coast and the 6th Marines in the center, tied in to the 25th. The 8th Marines remained in the north to mop up.

Photograph:

Tramping the cane was a tiring work, especially when the direction of the advance did not parallel the rows of the fields. Each stalk was strong enough to trip a man careless about where he stepped. Advancing through such a field was fraught with danger, also, from hidden trip wires attached to demolitions, and from dug-in Japanese. In addition, the dry cane fields could easily catch fire and trap the Marines.

All this was accomplished with only minor casualties. For 26 July, for example, the 2nd Division reported two killed and 14 wounded. The heaviest losses since the first day and night of fighting had been sustained by the 14th Marines, the 4th Division’s artillery regiment, in the hours following the Japanese counterattack. An enemy shell hit the 1st Battalion’s fire direction center killing the battalion commander (Lieutenant Colonel Harry J. Zimmer), the intelligence officer, the operations officer, and seven other staff members; 14 other Marines at the battalion headquarters were wounded. Virtually all of the casualties sustained by that regiment during the Tinian campaign were taken on this single day, 25 July: 13 of the 14 killed, and 22 of the 29 wounded.

Photograph:

Marines of the 2d Division find some of the most difficult terrain on Tinian as they move up towards the top of Mount Lasso, one of the highest points on the island. Tinian, for the most part, was flat and level, and was under cultivation.

On the morning of 27 July, the “brush beating” drive to the south began in earnest. General Schmidt’s plan for the first two days of the drive alternated the main thrust between the two divisions. In the official history of the operation, the tactic was likened to “a man elbowing his way through the crowd,” swinging one arm and then the other.

The 2d Division got the heavier work on the 27th. XXIV Corps Artillery, firing from southern Saipan, softened up suspected enemy positions early in the morning and the division jumped off at 0730. It advanced rapidly, harassed by sporadic small arms fire. By 1345 it had reached its objective, gaining about 4,000 yards in just over six hours. The 4th Division moved out late in the morning against “negligible opposition,” reached its objective by noon and then called it a day. A Japanese prisoner complained to his captors, “You couldn’t drop a stick without bringing down artillery.”

The next morning, 28 July, the 4th got the “swinging elbow” job. It was now evident that the remaining Japanese defenders were rapidly retiring to the hills and caves along the southern coast. So opposition to the Marine advance was virtually nil. The 4th moved more than two miles in less than four hours with troops riding on half-tracks and tanks. Jumping off again early in the afternoon in “blitz fashion,” they overran the airfield at Gurguan Point, led by Major Richard K. Schmidt’s 4th Tank Battalion, and quit for the day at 1730 after gaining 7,300 yards—a little more than four miles. The 2d Division, given light duty under the Schmidt plan, moved ahead a few hundred yards, reached its objective in a couple of hours and dug in to await another morning.

General Cates later recalled how he spurred on his 4th Division troops: “I said, ‘Now, look here men, the [Hawaiian] island of Maui is waiting for us. See those ships out there? The quicker you get this over with, the quicker we’ll be back there.’ They almost ran over that island.”

On the 29th General Schmidt dropped the “elbowing” tactic and ordered both divisions to move as far and as fast as “practical.” Opposition had been so light that preparatory fires were canceled to save unneeded withdrawals from the diminishing supplies of artillery shells left on Saipan and to prevent “waste of naval gunfire on areas largely deserted by the enemy.”

The 2d Marines on the eastern terrain ran into pockets of resistance on a hill at Masalog Point; the 6th Marines encountered a 20-man Japanese patrol that attempted to penetrate the regiment’s lines after dark. The 25th took sniper fire as it moved through cane fields and later in the day engaged in a heavy firefight with Japanese troops fighting from dug-in positions. The Marines suffered several casualties and one of their tanks was disabled in this fight. But the resistance was overcome. The 24th Marines, operating near the west coast, ran into Japanese positions that included a series of mutually supporting bunkers. The 4th Tank

Battalion reported that the area “had to be overrun twice by tanks” before resistance ended.

By nightfall, more than half of Tinian island was in Marine hands. Troops of the 4th Division could see Tinian Town from their foxholes. This was good for morale but the night was marred by the weather and enemy activity. A soaking rain fell through the night. Enemy mortar tubes and artillery pieces fired incessantly, drawing counterbattery fire from Marine gunners. There were probes in front of the 3d Battalion, 25th Marines, silenced by mortar and small arms fire; 41 Japanese bodies were found in the area at daylight.

On 30 July—Jig plus 6—Tinian Town became the principal objective of the 4th Division and, specifically, Colonel Franklin A. Hart’s 24th Marines. At 0735 all of the division’s artillery battalions laid down preparatory fires in front of the Marine lines. After 10 minutes, the firing stopped and the troops moved out. At the same time, two destroyers and cruisers lying in Sunharon Harbor off the Tinian Town beaches began an hour-long bombardment of slopes around the town in support of the Marines. The regiment’s 1st Battalion had advanced 600 yards when it came under heavy fire from caves along the coast north of the town. With the help of tanks and armored amphibians operating offshore this problem was overcome. Flamethrowing tanks worked over the caves, allowing engineers to seal them up with demolition charges. In one cave, a 75mm gun was destroyed.

The regiment entered the ruins of Tinian Town at 1420. Except for one Japanese soldier who was eliminated on the spot, the town was deserted. After searching through the rubble for snipers and documents, the Marines drove on to the O-7 line objective south of town. Their greatest peril was from mines and booby traps planted in beach areas and roads.

Photograph:

BGen Merritt A. Edson (with binoculars), assistant division commander of the 2d Marine Division, follows the progress of his troops not far from the scene of action. Gen Edson was awarded the Medal of Honor for his heroism on Guadalcanal.

As the 24th moved south, the 25th Marines were seizing Airfield Number 4 on the eastern outskirts of Tinian Town. The unfinished facility, a prisoner revealed, was being rushed to completion to accommodate relief planes promised by Tokyo. Only one aircraft was parked on the crushed-coral air strip—a small, Zero-type fighter. Flying suits, goggles, and other equipment were found in a supply room.

Enroute to the airfield, the 25th had taken light small arms fire and while crossing the airstrip was mortared from positions to the south. This was the 25th’s last action of the Tinian campaign. It went into reserve and was relieved that night by units of the 23d Marines and the 1st Battalion, 8th Marines.

The 2d Division, operating to the east of the 4th, ran into occasional opposition from machine gun positions and a 70mm howitzer. The 3d Battalion, 2d Marines, had the roughest time. After silencing the howitzer, it attacked across an open field and chased a Japanese force into a large cave where, with the help of a flame-throwing tank, 89 Japanese were killed and four machine guns were destroyed. Soon afterward the battalion came under mortar fire. “It is beyond my memory as

to the number of casualties the 3d Battalion suffered at that time,” the unit’s commander, Lieutenant Colonel Walter F. Layer, later reported. “I personally rendered first aid to two wounded Marines and remember seeing six or seven Marines who were either wounded or killed by that enemy mortar fire. Tanks and half-tracks ... took the enemy under fire, destroying the enemy mortars.”

These were minor delays. The division reached its objective on time and was dug in by 1830. About 80 percent of the island was now in American hands.

Final Days

The Japanese were now cornered in a small area of southeastern Tinian. The Marines “had advanced so rapidly that only four square miles of the island remained for safe firing by ships not supporting battalions [i.e., not with shore spotters],” according to a report on 30 July by Rear Admiral Harry W. Hill, commander of the Northern Attack Force.

The Marine commander for the operation, Major General Schmidt, saw the end in sight and late on the afternoon of 30 July issued an operations order calling on the divisions to drive all the way to the southeast coastline, seize all territory remaining in enemy hands and “annihilate the opposing Japanese.”

This was not a trifling assignment; it produced the heaviest fighting since the counterattack on the night of Jig Day. A Japanese warrant officer captured on 29 July estimated that 500 troops of the *56th Naval Guard Force* and from 1,700 to 1,800 troops of the *50th Infantry Regiment* remained in the southeastern area in a battle-ready condition. American intelligence estimates on 29 July, based on daily reports from the divisions, reckoned that 3,000 Japanese soldiers and sailors had been killed or taken prisoner up to that point. If that was the case, two-thirds of the nearly 9,000 Japanese defenders were still alive on the island.

The terrain occupied by the Japanese main force was rugged, difficult to reach or traverse and well-suited for defense. Outside of Tinian Town the gentle landscape ended, with the ground rising to a high plateau 5,000 yards long and 2,000 yards wide, with altitudes higher than 500 feet. The plateau was rocky and covered with thick brush. There were many caves. Along the east coast, the cliff walls rose steeply and appeared impossible to scale. The approaches to the plateau were blocked by many cliffs of this sort as well as by jungle growth. A road in the center of the plateau, leading to its top, was reported by a prisoner to be mined. The plateau was the enemy’s last redoubt.

Photograph:

As a Navy corpsman administers a bottle of plasma to a wounded Marine, the stretcher bearers wait patiently to carry him on board a landing craft which will evacuate him to a hospital ship offshore, where he will be given full treatment.

It became the object of the most intense bombardments any Japanese force had yet experienced to date in World War II. Marine artillery regiments on the island and the XXIV Corps Artillery on southern Saipan fired throughout the night of 30–31 July on the wooded cliffines the Marines would face during their assault. At 0600, the battleships TENNESSEE and CALIFORNIA, the heavy cruiser LOUISVILLE, and the light cruisers MONTPELIER and BIRMINGHAM began the first of two sustained bombardments that morning. They fired for 75 minutes, then halted to allow a 40-minute strike on the plateau by 126 P-47s, North American Mitchell B-25 bombers, and Grumman Avenger torpedo bombers from the escort carrier KITKUN BAY. The planes dropped 69 tons of explosives before the offshore gunfire resumed for another 35 minutes. All told, the battleships and cruisers fired approximately 615 tons of shells at their targets. Artillerymen of the 10th Marines fired about 5,000 rounds during the night; 14th Marines gunners fired 2,000. The effect, one prisoner said, was “almost unbearable.”

Photograph:

Some badly wounded casualties died of their severe injuries after having been evacuated from Tinian. Those who succumbed to their wounds were buried at sea.

As you faced south on that morning, the regimental alignments from west coast to east coast were the 24th, 23d, 8th, 6th and 2d Marines. The task of the 24th was to clear out the western coastal area, with one battalion assigned to seizure of the plateau. The 2d Marines was to seal off the east coast at the base of the plateau. The 6th, 8th, and 23d Marines would assault the cliff areas and make their way to the top of the plateau.

Photograph:

Two Marines escort two apparently healthy, hearty, and willing Japanese prisoners to be turned in at the POW stockade in the rear of the fighting. Most of the prisoners taken on Tinian, however, were civilian workers rather than military men.

The 24th, jumping off with the 23d at 0830, moved into the coastal plain and immediately encountered brush and undergrowth so dense that tank operations were severely hampered. As compensation, armored amphibians lying offshore provided heavy fires against enemy beach positions and covered the regiment's right flank as it made its way down the coast. A platoon-size Japanese beach unit launched a foolish counterattack on the 1st Battalion, 24th Marines at about 1000. The Japanese were annihilated. Later, flame-throwing tanks burned off brush and undergrowth concealing Japanese riflemen.

Photograph:

Tank-infantry tactics perfected in prior operations proved successful on Tinian as well. The riflemen served as the eyes of the armored vehicle and

would direct the tank crewmen over a telephone mounted in a box on the rear of the tank.

On the regiment's left flank, the 3d Battalion was in assault at the base of the plateau. It encountered minimal opposition until about 1600 when it began to receive rifle and machine gun fire from cliff positions. Tanks were called on but soon found themselves mired in a minefield and were held up for several hours while engineers cleared 45 mines from the area.

The 1st Battalion, 23d Marines, encountered similar troubles. As the regiment approached the plateau, it ran into dense small arms fire from two positions—a small village at the base of the cliff and from the cliff face itself. It also began receiving fire from a “large-caliber weapon.” Lacking tank support the Marines pressed forward, running a few yards, diving on their bellies, getting up, and advancing again. Medium tanks finally came up in search of this elusive and well-concealed weapon. One of them took six quick hits from the concealed position of this Japanese gun. A second tank was hit but in the process the enemy position was discovered: a camouflaged, concrete bunker housing a 47mm antitank gun and 20 troops, all of whom were killed.

Photograph:

MajGen Clifton B. Cates, center, visits the command post of 24th Marines commander Col Franklin A. Hart. On the left is LtCol Charles D. Roberts, S-3 of the 24th Marines. Gen Cates would become the 19th Commandant of the Marine Corps.

The 2d Battalion of the 23d had similar difficulties. After coming under fire from riflemen and machine gunners, one of its supporting tanks was disabled by a mine. After its crew was taken to safety by another tank, the disabled vehicle was seized by the Japanese and used as an armored machine gun nest. Other tanks soon took it out. The 23d also lost that day two 37mm guns and a one-ton truck belonging to the regiment's half-track platoon. The guns and the vehicle got too far out front, came under heavy fire and were abandoned. A detail from the platoon later retrieved one of the guns, removed the breech block from the other one and brought back the .50-caliber machine gun from its mounting on the truck.

Photograph:

Tinian Town was made a shambles because U.S. commanders knew that the enemy was well emplaced, dug in, and expected landings on the beaches fronting the town. As a result, they directed a large share of the pre-Jig Day bombardment into the waterfront and surrounding area, thereby reinforcing Japanese beliefs that this is where the Marines would land.

Late in the afternoon, the 1st Battalion, 23d Marines, and a company from the 2d Battalion gained a foothold on top of the plateau; the 3d Battalion soon followed. To their left, the 3d Battalion, 8th Marines, shrugged off small arms fire early in the day and reached the base of the cliff where it stalled for the night. The

1st Battalion had better luck. Company A made it to the top of the plateau at 1650, followed by a platoon from Company C. Soon after, the whole battalion was atop the hill. It was followed by Companies E and G of the 2d Battalion.

The Company G commander was Captain Carl W. Hoffman, who later wrote the definitive histories of the Saipan and Tinian campaigns. In an oral history interview, he described his own experiences on top of the plateau the night of 31 July:

By the time we got up there ... there wasn't enough daylight left to get ourselves properly barbed-wired in, to get our fields of fire established, to site our interlocking bands of machine gun fire—all the things that should be done in preparing a good defense.

By dusk, the enemy commenced a series of probing attacks. Some Japanese intruded into our positions. It was a completely black night. So, with Japanese moving around in our positions, our troops became very edgy and were challenging everybody in sight. We didn't have any unfortunate incidents of Marines firing on Marines ... [because they] were well-seasoned by this point...

As the night wore on, the intensity of enemy attacks started to build and build and build. They finally launched a full scale *banzai* attack against [our] battalion... The strange thing the Japanese did here was that they executed one wave of attack after another against a 37mm position firing cannister ammunition...

That gun just stacked up dead Japanese... As soon as one Marine gunner would drop another would take his place. [Eight of 10 men who manned the gun were killed or wounded]. Soon we were nearly shoulder-high with dead Japanese in front of that weapon... By morning we had defeated the enemy. Around us were lots of dead ones, hundreds of them as a matter of fact. From then on ... we were able to finish the rest of the campaign without difficulty... People have often said that the Tinian campaign was the easiest campaign ... in the Pacific...

For those Marines who were in that 37mm position up on the escarpment, Tinian had to be the busiest campaign within the Pacific war.

Photograph:

A lone member of the 24th Marines, 4th Marine Division patrolling through the outskirts of Tinian Town, pauses at a torii of a Shinto shrine. The ruins about him give proof of the heavy shelling visited upon the town before the landing.

Hoffman had another lively experience before leaving the island. He was a trumpet addict and carried his horn with him all through the Pacific war:

For Tinian, I didn't take any chances such as sending my horn ashore in a machine gun cart or a battalion ambulance. I had it flown over to me. One evening, my troops were in a little perimeter with barbed wire all around us on top of the cliff. My Marines were shouting in requests: "*Oh, You Beautiful Doll*" and "*Pretty Baby*" and others. While I was playing these tunes, all of a sudden we heard this scream of "*banzai*." An individual Japanese soldier was charging right toward me and right toward the barbed wire. The Marines had their weapons ready and he must have been hit from 14 different directions at once. He didn't get to throw [his] grenade... I've always cited him as the individual who didn't like my

music. He was no supporter of my trumpet playing. But ... I even continued my little concert after we had accounted for him.

A final *banzai* attack on the night the 37mm guns had their big harvest, occurred in the early morning hours of 1 August. A 150-man Japanese force attacked the 1st Battalion, 28th Marines, on Hoffman's left flank. After 30 minutes, the main thrust of the attack was spent and at dawn the Japanese withdrew; 100 bodies lay in an area 70 yards square in front of the position of Company E, 2d Battalion, 28th Marines. The 8th Marines took 74 casualties that night.

The following morning the two divisions went back to work. The 2d moved across the plateau toward its eastern cliffs, the 4th toward cliffs on the south and west. When they reached the escarpment's edge, overlooking the ocean, their job was essentially done. At 1855, General Schmidt declared the island "secure," meaning that organized resistance had ended. But not the killing. Hundreds of Japanese troops remained holed up in the caves pock-mocking the southern cliffs rising up from the ocean.

On the morning of 2 August, a Japanese force of 200 men sallied forth in an attack on the 3d Battalion, 6th Marines. After two hours of combat, 119 Japanese were dead. Marine losses included the battalion commander, Lieutenant Colonel John W. Easley. Shortly afterwards, the regiment's 2d Battalion, led by Lieutenant Colonel Edmund B. Games, was hit by 100 Japanese, 30 of whom were killed before the unit withdrew.

Contacts of this kind continued for months. By the end of the year, Colonel Clarence R. Wallace's 8th Marines, left on Tinian for mopping-up operations, had lost 38 killed and 125 wounded; Japanese losses were 500 dead.

Beginning on 1 August, there were large-scale surrenders by civilians leaving the caves in which they had taken refuge. Marine intelligence officers estimated that 5,000 to 10,000 civilians had been hiding out in the southeast sector.

Photograph:

This cliff was a formidable obstacle to movement on 31 July. Cutting practically across the entire island, it provided problems for both divisions. Here, 2d Division Marines climb the rocky slopes toward the flat plateau on top. The 1st and 2d Battalions, 8th Marines, spent a busy night (31 July-1 August) of the operation holding a road that curled up this slope.

Photograph:

The end of the battle is in sight as troops of the 24th Marines and tanks of the 4th Tank Battalion comb across the coastal plateau at Tinian's extreme southern end. The 23d Marines, whose zone ended at the top of the steep cliff seen in this picture, had to retrace its steps in order to reach the lowlands. Aguijan Island may be seen dimly in the misty background.

Photograph:

This 75mm pack howitzer, nicknamed “Miss Connie,” is firing into a Japanese-held cave from the brink of a sheer cliff in southern Tinian. The gun was locked securely in this unusual position after parts were hand-carried to the cliff’s edge.

Marine Major General James L. Underhill, who took command of the island as military governor on 10 August, became responsible for the care and feeding of these civilians. The flow of civilian refugees began on August 1, he recalled:

About 500 came through immediately, the next day about 800, then a thousand and then two thousand and so on in increasing numbers until about 8,000 were in. The remaining 3,000 hid out in caves and dribbled in over a period of months. About 30 percent adult males, 20 percent adult females, and about 50 percent children. Many of them were in bad shape—hungry, wounded, ill and with few possessions beyond the clothes they were wearing.

It was estimated that about 4,000 civilians were killed in the bombardments of Tinian and in fighting on the island. On Saipan, Marines had been helpless to prevent mass suicides among the civilian population. They were more successful at Tinian. Unfortunate incidents occurred—civilians, for example, dying under Marine fire after wandering into the lines at night.

There were also suicides and ritual murders, as indicated in a report from the 23d Marines on 3 August:

Several freak incidents occurred during the day: (1) Jap children thrown [by their parents] over cliff into ocean; (2) [Japanese] military grouped civilians in numbers of 15 to 20 and attached explosive charges to them, blowing them to bits; (3) Both military and civilians lined up on the cliff and hurled themselves into the ocean; (4) Many civilians pushed over cliff by [Japanese] soldiers.

Efforts to prevent incidents of this kind were generally successful. Marines used amplifiers on land and offshore to promise good treatment to civilians and soldiers who would surrender peacefully. “Thousands of civilians,” Hoffman wrote, “many clad in colorful Japanese silk, responded to the promises—though it was plain from the expressions on their faces that they expected the worst.”

Medal of Honor Recipients

[Sidebar (page 29)]



Private First Class Robert Lee Wilson's Medal of Honor citation reads as follows: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty while serving with the Second Battalion, Sixth Marines, Second Marine Division, during action against enemy Japanese forces at Tinian Island, Marianas Group, on 4 August 1944. As one of a group of Marines advancing through heavy underbrush to neutralize isolated points of resistance, Private First Class Wilson daringly preceded his companions toward a pile of rocks where Japanese troops were supposed to be hiding. Fully aware of the danger involved, he was moving forward while the remainder of the squad, armed with automatic rifles, closed together in the rear when an enemy grenade landed in the midst of the group. Quick to act, Private First Class Wilson cried a warning to the men and unhesitatingly threw himself on the grenade, heroically sacrificing his own life that the others might live and fulfill their mission. His exceptional valor, his courageous loyalty and unwavering devotion to duty in the face of grave peril reflect the highest credit upon Private First Class Wilson and the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country."



Private Joseph W. Ozbourn's Medal of Honor citation reads as follows: "For conspicuous gallantry and intrepidity at the risk of his life above and beyond the call of duty as a Browning Automatic Rifleman serving with the First Battalion, Twenty-third Marines, Fourth Marine Division, during the battle for enemy Japanese-held Tinian Island, Marianas Islands, 30 July 1944. As a member of a platoon assigned the mission of clearing the remaining Japanese troops from dugouts and pillboxes along a tree line, Private Ozbourn, flanked by two men on either side, was moving forward to throw an armed hand grenade into a dugout when a terrific blast from the entrance severely wounded the four men and himself. Unable to throw the grenade into the dugout and with no place to hurl it without endangering the other men, Private Ozbourn unhesitatingly grasped it close to his body and fell upon it, sacrificing his own life to absorb the full impact of the explosion, but saving his comrades. His great personal valor and unwavering loyalty reflect the highest credit upon Private Ozbourn and the United States Naval Service. He gallantly gave his life for his country."

Aftermath

By 14 August the entire 4th Division had embarked on the long trip to its base camp on Maui. It had suffered in this brief operation more than 1,100 casualties, including 212 killed. Its next assignment would be Iwo Jima.

Photograph:

In an impromptu command post set up behind his 8th Marines, Col Clarence R. Wallace checks the progress of his frontline troops on a

situation map. The overhead poncho provides some protection from Tinian's constant rains.

The 2d Division remained in the Marianas, setting up a base camp on Saipan where the 2d and 6th regiments took up residence in mid-August. The 8th Marines remained on Tinian for mopping-up purposes until October 25, when the 2d and 3d Battalions moved to Saipan, leaving an unhappy 1st Battalion behind until its relief at the end of the year.

The campaign for Tinian had cost the division 760 casualties, including 105 killed. These numbers did not include casualties suffered after the island was "secured" on 1 August.

Japanese military losses, based on bodies counted and buried, totaled 5,000. Other thousands are assumed to have been sealed up in caves and underground fortifications. The number of prisoners taken was 250 by some counts and 400 by others.

Photograph:

It was not long after the initial landing that Marines encountered the civilian population of Tinian. Here Marines bathe a tiny Tinian girl after she and her family had been removed from a hillside dugout. Following the scrubbing, new clothes were found for the children and the entire family was taken to a place of safety in the rear.

The capture of the Marianas gave the Army Air Corps the B-29 bases it needed for the bombing of Japan. They were located 1,200 nautical miles from the home islands of Japan, a distance ideal for the B-29 with its range of 2,800 miles. Tinian became the home for two wings of the Twentieth Air Force. Three months after the conquest of Tinian, B-29s were hitting the Japanese mainland. Over the next year, according to numbers supplied by the Air Force to historian Carl Hoffman, the B-29s flew 29,000 missions out of the Marianas, dropped 157,000 tons of explosives which, by Japanese estimates killed 260,000 people, left 9,200,000 homeless, and demolished or burned 2,210,000 homes.

Photograph:

Former Marine Corps Combat Correspondent SSgt Federico Claveria looks at photograph of himself giving an interned Tinian child candy 25 years earlier. Claveria participated in the initial landings on Roi-Namur and Saipan also.

Photograph:

Top commanders gather for the flagraising on 3 August 1944 at the conclusion of Tinian operations. From left are RAdm Harry W. Hill; MajGen Harry Schmidt; Adm Raymond L. Spruance; LtGen Holland M. Smith; VAdm Richmond Kelly Turner; MajGen Thomas A. Watson; and MajGen Clifton B. Cates.

Tinian's place in the history of warfare was insured by the flight of Enola Gay on 6 August 1945. It dropped a nuclear weapon on Hiroshima. Two days later a second nuclear weapon was dropped on Nagasaki. The next day, the Japanese government surrendered.



“Japanese Backyard in Tinian Town,” by Gail Zumwalt

In his official history of the 2d Marine Division, Richard W. Johnston records the reaction when news of the surrender reached the division at its base on Saipan:

They looked at Tinian's clean and rocky coast, at the coral boulders where they had gone ashore, and they thought of the forbidding coasts of Japan—the coasts that awaited them in the fall. “That Tinian was a pretty good investment, I guess,” one Marine finally said.

The anecdote may be apocryphal. The sentiment is historically true.

Photograph:

The hand salute in its various forms is rendered by those present as the colors are raised over Tinian on 1 August. At the extreme right is VAdm Richmond K. Turner; commander, Expeditionary/Northern Attack Force for the Tinian landings.

Sources

In addition to the official Marine Corps histories of the Tinian campaign, Lt John C. Chapin, *The Fourth Marine Division in World War II* (Washington, August, 1945); John

Costello, *The Pacific War* (New York, 1981); John Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986); Maj Carl W. Hoffman, *Saipan: The Beginning of the End* (Washington, 1950); Maj Carl W. Hoffman, *The Seizure of Tinian* (Washington, 1951); Frank Olney Hough, *The Island War: The U.S. Marine Corps in the Pacific* (Philadelphia, 1947); Jeter A. Isely and Philip A. Crowl, *The U.S. Marine Corps and Amphibious War* (Princeton, 1951); Richard W. Johnston, *Follow Me! The Story of the Second Marine Division in World War II* (New York, 1948); Allen R. Millett, *Semper Fidelis: The History of the United States Marine Corps* (New York, 1991); J. Robert Moskin, *The U.S. Marine Corps Story* (Boston, 1992); Carl W. Proehl (ed.), *The Fourth Marine Division in World War II* (Nashville, 1988); Henry I. Shaw, Jr., Bernard C. Nalty, Edwin T. Turnbladh, *Central Pacific Drive: History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, vol III (Washington, 1966); Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun* (New York, 1985).

The transcripts of the following retired Marines interviewed for the Marine Corps Oral History Program reside in the Oral History Collection, Marine Corps Historical Center, Washington Navy Yard, Washington, D.C. Their roles at Tinian are as indicated: BGen William W. Buchanan, assistant naval gunfire officer, 4th Marine Division; Gen Clifton B. Cates, commanding general, 4th Marine Division; LtCol Justice M. Chambers, commanding officer, 3d Battalion, 25th Marines; MajGen Carl W. Hoffman, commanding officer, Company G, 2d Battalion, 8th Marines; Gen Robert E. Hogaboom, G-3, Northern Troops Landing Force; MajGen Louis R. Jones, commanding officer, 23d Marines; BGen Frederick J. Karch, S-3, 14th Marines; MajGen Wood B. Kyle, commanding officer, 1st Battalion, 2d Marines; MajGen William W. Rogers, chief of staff, 4th Marine Division; LtGen James L. Underhill, island commander, Tinian.

Errata

In *A Different War: Marines in Europe and North Africa*, page 32 reports Adm Hewitt visited the cruiser "HELENA (CL-50)" in spring 1946. This cruiser was sunk in 1943. The ship the admiral boarded was its successor, the heavy cruiser HELENA (CA-75). On page 27 of *Liberation: Marines in the Recapture of Guam*, the 77th Infantry Division patrolled hills to the east, rather than to the west. The date of the action which merited a Medal of Honor for PFC Harold G. Epperson is 25 June 1944, not July, as stated on page 30 of *Breaching the Marianas: The Battle for Saipan*.
