

**LEARNING UNDER FIRE:  
A COMBAT UNIT IN THE SOUTHWEST PACIFIC**

A Dissertation

by

**JAMES SCOTT POWELL**

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of  
Texas A&M University  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

**DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY**

August 2006

Major Subject: History

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**ABSTRACT**

Learning Under Fire:

A Combat Unit in the Southwest Pacific. (August 2006)

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Engaging a determined enemy across a broad range of conditions, the U.S. Army in World War II's Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA) played an important role in the defeat of Japan. How units fought and learned in SWPA and how they adapted to the evolving challenges of their environment is the focus of this dissertation. The subject remains largely unexplored, especially in contrast to the attention the European theater has received. An examination of the 112th's performance not only illuminates an understudied area in the historiography of World War II but also offers relevant lessons for contemporary military organizations.

Mining a rich collection of primary sources, this study analyzes the development of the 112th Cavalry Regiment and sheds light on how American units in SWPA prepared for and conducted combat operations. A National Guard unit federalized in 1940 and sent to the Pacific theater in 1942, the 112th performed garrison duties on New Caledonia and Woodlark Island and eventually fought in New Britain, New Guinea, and the Philippines. Before deactivating, the regiment also served in Japan during the first months of the occupation.

Concentrating on one unit illustrates the extent to which ground forces in SWPA were driven to learn and adapt. The 112th had mixed success when it came to carrying out its assigned missions effectively. The same was true of its efforts to learn and improve. The unit's gradual introduction to combat worked to its advantage, but learning was not simply a matter of

building on experience. It also involved responding to unexpected challenges. Experience tended to help, but the variety of circumstances in which the cavalrymen fought imposed limits on the applicability of that experience. Different situations demanded that learning occur in different ways. Learning also occurred differently across the organization's multiple levels. Moreover, failure to learn in one area did not, as a matter of course, undermine advancement in all. Much depended on the presence of conditions that facilitated or disrupted the learning process, such as the intricacy of the tasks involved, the part higher headquarters played, and the enemy's own responses to the changing environment.

Dedicated to Bill Hecker

Friend,

fallen comrade

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

“You can’t tell me that we need another biography of some Confederate brigadier general when we don’t even know how U.S. Army divisions fought in the Southwest Pacific.” So said Professor Brian Linn in typical candor when, as a new graduate student, I told him I had no idea about the topic of my master’s thesis – other than that I was thinking of writing something on the American Civil War. Although this dissertation does not fill the void he identified, it at least makes modest gains. His comment served as the inspiration to pursue the path I did, and it has been a rewarding intellectual journey. For that – and for his guidance offered along the way – I thank him.

Over the course of the five years it has taken to complete this project, many others have helped directly and indirectly to make the manuscript what it is. I owe a debt of gratitude to committee members Joseph Dawson, Jim Burk, and Arnold Krammer for their scholarly advice and for their sustained interest in a subject somewhat removed from their primary fields of study. As an instructor in the Department of History at West Point, I had the chance to continue the work I began in graduate school. Thanks to Brigadier General Bob Doughty and Colonels Lance Betros and Mat Moten for granting me the time to conduct additional research and affording me the opportunity to present a paper on my topic at an academic conference. Thanks also to Melissa Mills of the History Department for her fine administrative support of those trips. Members of the faculty and staff at the School of Advanced Military Studies in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, provided tremendous encouragement and support as well. Colonel Kevin Benson was gracious in allowing me to select a monograph topic that enabled me to turn that course requirement into a chapter of my dissertation. As my monograph advisor, Dr. Pete Schifferle performed an invaluable service by helping me to see more clearly the significance of

my project as a whole. Thanks also to Colonel Mike Warburton, Candi Hamm, and Angela Edwards for their assistance as I negotiated the last hectic days of completing SAMS and preparing for my dissertation defense.

But for the dedication and interest of Jack Dunlap, this dissertation would have been colorless in its content and utterly tedious to write. His devotion to the subject of this study, the 112th Cavalry Regiment, spans over half a century. As a boy, Jack watched the National Guardsmen with keen fascination as they performed their duties in the stables and on the drill field of Fort Clark, Texas. Over the years, he has gathered an extensive collection of diaries, journals, letters, newspaper clippings, and official reports that deal with the 112th. He has also conducted numerous interviews and still corresponds with many veterans of the organization. This project is in large part the result of Jack's hard work, enthusiastic support, and overwhelming generosity. In the early stages of my research, Jack granted me access to his private collection and allowed me to stay in his home for over a week (a hospitable gesture for which I must thank Jack's charming wife, Alma, as well). He also facilitated my own correspondence with several men who served with the regiment and offered careful assessments of the dissertation's initial chapters. All of this assistance came without the slightest imposition upon my interpretation or analysis.

I received excellent cooperation from the 112th Cavalry Association. I especially thank Ava Moody Condit for making me feel welcome at the unit's 2001 reunion in Dallas, Texas, and for "rounding up" a pool of interviewees for me to speak with at that event. My interaction with the veterans who lived what I have merely examined from a distance has been humbling and awe-inspiring. My analysis finds fault with their performance in places, but this criticism is conveyed with a deep respect for the service of the 112th's officers and men, the hardships they endured, and the sacrifices many of them made.



Several archivists and curators assisted me in my search for primary source material. Among them are Will Mahoney of the National Archives and Records Administration in College Park, MD, Dave Keough of the United States Army Military History Institute in Carlisle, PA, Lorraine Allen of the United States Army Armor School Research Library in Fort Knox, KY, Brian Schenk and Ted Aanenson of the Texas Military Forces Museum in Austin, TX, Alan Aimone of the Cadet Library at the United States Military Academy in West Point, NY, Mark Danley of the United States Cavalry Memorial Research Library in Fort Riley, KS, and James Zobel of the Douglas MacArthur Memorial Archives in Norfolk, VA.

Two friends – fellow officers and historians both – provided encouragement in the form of healthy peer pressure. Thanks to Mark Grotelueschen and Matt Morton for never letting me forget that I had a dissertation to finish.

The number of my closest supporters has steadily grown over the years I have labored on this project. When I started my research, I had my wife and two young daughters. Tisha, Mackenzie, and Cassie have since been joined by Delaney, Karlie, and Aubrey. Needless to say, it has become increasingly difficult to work at home but undoubtedly more pleasant. Just today, six-year-old Cassie eyed the pages of my manuscript stacked on the dining room table and asked if what I had written was longer than the dictionary. “Thankfully no,” I replied. “But I hope that it’s more interesting.” I am especially grateful for my wonderful family for helping me to remember through their laughter and love the important things in life.

And finally . . . *Soli Deo Gloria*.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
ABSTRACT.....	iii
DEDICATION.....	v
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	vi
TABLE OF CONTENTS.....	ix
CHAPTER	
I INTRODUCTION.....	1
II THE TEXAS CAVALRY PREPARES FOR WAR.....	10
III CLOSER TO THE CAULDRON: WOODLARK AND ARAWE.....	51
IV INTO THE JUNGLE OF FIRE.....	101
V AITAPE INTERLUDE.....	142
VI “A TERRIBLY HARD CAMPAIGN”.....	173
VII COMBAT ON LUZON: LEARNING AND THE LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE.....	232
VIII ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS: THE OCCUPATION OF JAPAN.....	278
IX CONCLUSION.....	307
REFERENCES.....	322
VITA.....	334

## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

In *The American Way of War*, Russell Weigley describes the United States war against Japan as an unparalleled achievement of arms: “The American victories combined decisiveness with limited casualties and costs in proportions which had eluded every power since Prussia’s victories of 1866 and 1870-71.” Furthermore, the United States imposed its will upon “a brave and skillful antagonist, not a decayed or incompetent power such as Prussia had overcome.” Weigley attributes this impressive triumph to the successful application of American sea power, supplemented by twentieth century developments in aerial and amphibious warfare.<sup>1</sup> In general, military historians agree with his argument.

But with this recognition of air and naval superiority as the dominant factors in the defeat of Japan, the land war fought by the U.S. Army tends to be underappreciated. This seems to be the case principally when it comes to the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA). Celebrated campaigns of the Central Pacific have a secure position in popular memory, but, for every American who recognizes names like Saipan, Iwo Jima, and Okinawa, who can say he has heard of Hollandia, Biak, or Leyte – if not for the naval battle that occurred off its shores? Furthermore, much of the consideration that SWPA draws revolves around its commander. Regardless of whether one views General Douglas MacArthur as a strategic genius or an insufferable blowhard, his flamboyant personality often overshadows the actions of his troops in many accounts.<sup>2</sup> Yet MacArthur exercised minimal influence over the conduct of operations at the tactical level, where U.S. Army units in SWPA engaged a determined enemy across a wide range of conditions. How those units fought and learned and how they adapted to the evolving

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This dissertation follows the style and format of *The Journal of Military History*.

challenges of their environment is the focus of this dissertation. The subject, as it pertains to SWPA, remains largely unexplored, especially in contrast to the attention the European theater has received.<sup>3</sup>

Most textbooks on American military history focus on the broad themes involving the conflict with Japan. They emphasize the decisiveness of naval and air superiority in the Pacific War and the factors shaping strategy in that theater. Implicit in many treatments is the assertion that the Army adapted to the challenges it encountered. After a harsh introduction to jungle warfare, U.S. forces at the operational level learned how to make the most of their material advantages and, seizing the initiative, kept their enemy off balance with a series of amphibious landings. Improved American tactical skill in air, sea, and conventional ground warfare led Japanese commanders to adopt defensive techniques, which, along with the resolve of their soldiers, negated much of the effect of U.S. firepower. In turn, this drove American units to close with the enemy and destroy him with organic infantry weapons, tanks, and demolitions. While offering a positive assessment of U.S. combat performance, the purview of these books prohibits them from discussing in any detail how this learning process occurred.<sup>4</sup>

General histories of World War II also emphasize the joint nature of operations in the Pacific but still provide little explanation on how ground units trained, adapted, and fought. Three popular and critically acclaimed texts serve to illustrate this group. *A War to Be Won*, by Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, focuses on strategic issues, such as the separate American offensives in the Central Pacific and SWPA. The authors contend that U.S. forces made excellent use of firepower to advance against a tenacious enemy.<sup>5</sup> Posing a similar argument, John Ellis' *Brute Force* asserts that the Japanese collapsed under the "steamroller" of American air, sea, and ground power.<sup>6</sup> Ronald H. Spector's *Eagle Against the Sun* explores the strategic and operational levels of the Japanese-American conflict, particularly the consequences

of the two-pronged advance, interservice rivalry, and MacArthur's obsession with the Philippines.<sup>7</sup> Although such histories provide a good overview of the combat conditions in various campaigns, they offer no analysis of how U.S. fighting organizations took advantage of their material superiority at the tactical level or how they incorporated the lessons of hard-earned experience into future battles. None of these works cover stateside training or evaluate how well it prepared American soldiers for combat. None explain the learning process that occurred as units developed better methods of fighting and surviving. None address how these methods were disseminated. Equally lacking are descriptions of the training that took place outside of – or, for that matter, inside of – the combat zone.

Another group of historical works provides more detail on certain aspects of combat in the Southwest Pacific but still does not describe the process units went through as they responded to change. The so-called “Green Books” of the U.S. Army's official history offer exhaustive narratives on specific operations but do not discuss how outfits adapted between campaigns.<sup>8</sup> In *MacArthur's Jungle War*, Stephen R. Taaffe examines the SWPA commander's 1944 “leap-frogging” offensive along the northern coast of New Guinea. Detailed as the author's account of the combat conditions on New Guinea may be, Taaffe does not explain how the specific lessons learned on the front lines were applied to future battles. In *Touched With Fire*, Eric Bergerud describes the fighting in the South Pacific at the platoon level but virtually ignores the middle echelons of regiment and battalion.<sup>9</sup> Yet at these levels, leaders compiled the lessons their subordinates learned and used them to inform the development of training programs intended to help meet future challenges. Finally, studies such as Edward Drea's *Defending the Driniumor* and Jay Luvaas' chapter on Buna in *America's First Battles* provide a detailed perspective of a specific operation, but they do not address how units applied what they learned in these battles to later combat.<sup>10</sup>

This overview of the literature indicates that a gap exists in the historiography of the U.S. Army in the Southwest Pacific. Broad studies provide little depth, characterizing American ground forces as generally competent at the tactical level, where they relied on firepower and methodical advances to overcome the tenacity and defensive savvy of their Japanese opponents. However, these books do not explain how units achieved and maintained the competence attributed to them. On the other hand, those offering a deeper examination on the nature of combat lack breadth and do not discuss how organizations altered their techniques and procedures over time. In contrast to works probing related topics in the European theater, very few studies have looked closely at the training and performance of American units across the spectrum of conflict in SWPA – or elsewhere in the Pacific.<sup>11</sup>

With these critical omissions in mind, this dissertation adopts as a model Michael D. Doubler's *Closing With the Enemy*, which assesses U.S. Army combat performance in the advance across Northwest Europe in 1944 and 1945. Examining a cross-section of divisions, Doubler describes how those organizations developed new tactics and techniques as they fought their way through France and Belgium and into Germany. He emphasizes the ability of American units to adapt quickly to the diverse conditions they encountered and viewed this aptitude for innovation as a key factor contributing to the success of the U.S. Army in the European Theater of Operations.<sup>12</sup> As in Europe, GIs fighting in New Britain, New Guinea, and the Philippines faced a resourceful, determined enemy whose resistance tested their abilities in diverse conditions. Taking a more focused approach than Doubler's book, this study analyzes the 112th Cavalry's wartime experience from its mobilization and stateside training through its years of combat in SWPA to its participation in the subsequent occupation of Japan.

Built around a core of Texas National Guardsmen, the 112th had a background similar to many of the units that fought in SWPA.<sup>13</sup> Federalized in November 1940, the outfit deployed as

a separate regiment of horse cavalry to the Pacific theater in July 1942. It served in a mounted status on New Caledonia until May 1943 when it turned in its horses and joined MacArthur's command in SWPA. From June to November, the 112th secured an airdrome on Woodlark Island but encountered no Japanese forces there. Its first exposure to combat in a jungle environment came in December at Arawe, New Britain. Troopers parried several minor attacks on their position but met with repeated failure in their own attempts to eliminate a carefully concealed enemy strongpoint until reinforcements arrived.

The next campaign proved to be a defining action for the regiment. Transported to New Guinea in June 1944, the cavalymen buttressed the Driniumor River defenses and blunted a ferocious offensive that threatened them with encirclement. Over many weeks, the outfit withstood numerous assaults, conducted extensive patrolling operations, and even enjoyed a measure of success when it responded quickly to enemy thrusts with aggressive counterattacks. In this extraordinary battle, the 112th showed that it had grasped at least some of the complexities of infantry combat.

Nevertheless, operations in the Philippines that November demonstrated that the regiment still had much to learn. Fighting over Leyte's rugged central mountain range as part of Sixth Army's multi-pronged advance, the 112th continued to struggle with the problem of destroying Japanese prepared positions. Different challenges faced the cavalymen on Luzon from January to June 1945. East of Manila, a number of factors combined to make the environment quite complicated, including the civilian population, rough terrain, a variety of unit missions, and the Japanese themselves – at times fragmented and weak, on other occasions formidable and well-supported. As the war in the Pacific neared its end, the regiment trained for the invasion of Japan, only to shift its focus abruptly to occupation duty.

Concentrating on one organization illustrates the extent to which ground forces operating in SWPA were driven to learn and adapt. Overall, the 112th had mixed success when it came to carrying out its assigned missions effectively. With respect to learning and improving, it had a similar experience. How did it learn? What conditions enhanced its ability to do so? In instances where the unit failed to learn, why did it fail? Evidence of tactical and technical innovation is not hard to find in the regiment. More difficult to discern are the details behind how its officers and men arrived at those improvements. By examining the performance of the 112th as it met a wide range of challenges over time, this study explores with specificity the process of learning in military units and sheds light on the nuances related to that process.

Throughout the war, the regiment accumulated a good deal of combat experience. Yet the variety of circumstances in which it fought meant that there were limits on how well cavalymen could apply that experience. Knowledge acquired in prior campaigns led to many lessons as GIs interpreted new information and developed methods and approaches better suited to the situations they faced.<sup>14</sup> In many cases, past experience facilitated this interpretation and even encouraged adaptation. The outfit attempted to capitalize on lessons learned in battle and no doubt benefited from this practice, but seldom did it face the same scenario in the next operation. Each presented new obstacles to overcome. Though the 112th's gradual introduction to the difficulty and severity of combat in SWPA worked to its advantage, learning was not simply a matter of building on experience and continually honing a small set of relevant skills. It was also a matter of discovering formerly unidentified shortcomings and taking action to improve them. Moreover, different situations demanded that learning occur in different ways. Experience tended to help, but only in areas suitable for incremental improvement. Complicated tasks demanding a substantial shift in the 112th's behavior called for a more deliberate effort. Oftentimes – and for a number of reasons – such efforts did not materialize.



Though supported with secondary works, this dissertation is based almost entirely on primary documents. U.S. Army official histories of World War II and memoirs of senior commanders provide information on the overall situation in SWPA and the 112th's role in Sixth Army operations, as do the papers of General Walter Krueger, maintained at West Point, New York. Records at the National Archives in College Park, Maryland, detail how the unit fought and reacted to its combat experience. These documents include historical reports written shortly after each operation, squadron and regimental staff journals, training memoranda, tactical orders, and the unit diary, which covers the 112th's daily actions from its overseas deployment to its post-war occupation duties in Japan. Recollections of 112th veterans add color to the information found in the official record. The available sources consist of several diaries and unpublished memoirs, as well as interviews conducted decades after the war. These address a wide variety of issues, including mobilization, pre-war training, combat performance, unit cohesion, attitudes toward the enemy, and officer-enlisted men relations. Documents in the Combined Arms Research Library in Fort Leavenworth, Kansas, and the U.S. Army Armor Research Library in Fort Knox, Kentucky, also contain helpful information, particularly concerning units operating adjacent to the 112th.

Though no doubt fascinating in its own right, the experience of the 112th Cavalry in the Southwest Pacific offers more than a riveting account of World War II combat. More importantly, it provides a means of studying the evolution of a military organization as it trained, fought, and learned – taking the knowledge gained through blood shed and striving to adapt so as to shed less.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Russell F. Weigley, *The American Way of War: A History of United States Military Strategy and Policy* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1973), 311.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of MacArthur's force of personality, as well as his popular appeal, can be gauged by the numerous works about SWPA that include his name in their title, including the biographies and memoirs of other commanders. For example, see Daniel E. Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy: Seventh Amphibious Force Operations, 1943-1945* (Annapolis, MD: United States Naval Institute, 1969); Edward J. Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA: Codebreaking and the War Against Japan, 1942-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1992); Harry A. Gailey, *MacArthur's Victory: The War in New Guinea, 1943-1944* (New York: Presidio Press, 2004); Thomas E. Griffith, Jr., *MacArthur's Airman: General George C. Kenney and the War in the Southwest Pacific* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998); Nathan Prefer, *MacArthur's New Guinea Campaign* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Books, 1995); John F. Shortal, "MacArthur's Fireman: Robert L. Eichelberger," *Parameters: U.S. Army War College Quarterly* 16 (Autumn 1986): 58-67; and Stephen R. Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War: The 1944 New Guinea Campaign* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1998). At least one more book alludes to the general's dominant character in its title while another acknowledges it and provides something of a corrective on behalf of the SWPA commander's subordinates, dubbed "the forgotten men of World War II." See Paul Chwialkowski, *In Caesar's Shadow: The Life of Robert L. Eichelberger* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1993); and William M. Leary, ed., *We Shall Return!: MacArthur's Commanders and the Defeat of Japan, 1942-1945* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1988), respectively. Quote on p. ix of Leary.

<sup>3</sup> See for example, John Sloan Brown, *Draftee Division: The 88th Infantry Division in World War II* (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1986); Michael D. Doubler, *Closing With the Enemy: How GIs Fought the War in Europe, 1944-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1994); and Peter R. Mansoor, *The GI Offensive in Europe: The Triumph of American Infantry Divisions, 1941-1945* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1999).

<sup>4</sup> For example, see Allan R. Millett and Peter Maslowski, *For the Common Defense: A Military History of the United States of America* (New York: Free Press, 1984), 440-46, 460-64; Robert A. Doughty et al., *Warfare in the Western World*, vol. 2, *Military Operations Since 1871* (Lexington, MA: D. C. Heath and Company, 1996), 809-39; Maurice Matloff, ed., *American Military History*, vol. 2, *1902-1996* (Conshohocken, PA: Combined Books, 1996), 157-86.

<sup>5</sup> Williamson Murray and Allan R. Millett, *A War to Be Won: Fighting the Second World War* (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2000), 200-17, 362-73, 493-508.

<sup>6</sup> John Ellis, *Brute Force: Allied Strategy and Tactics in the Second World War* (New York: Viking Press, 1990), 467-522, 536-38.

<sup>7</sup> Ronald H. Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War With Japan* (New York: Free Press, 1985). See also Gerhard L. Weinberg, *A World at Arms: A Global History of World War II* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and John Costello, *The Pacific War* (New York: Rawson, Wade Publishers, Inc., 1981). Geoffrey Perret, *There's a War to Be Won: The United States Army in World War II* (New York: Random House, 1991) is a popular history that tends to exaggerate the U.S. Army's achievements.

<sup>8</sup> Those that cover the campaigns addressed in this study are John Miller, Jr., *United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific: CARTWHEEL: The Reduction of Rabaul* (Washington, D.C.:

GPO, 1959); Robert Ross Smith, *United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific: Approach to the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1953); M. Hamlin Cannon, *United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific: Leyte* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1954); and Smith, *United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific: Triumph in the Philippines* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1963).

<sup>9</sup> Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 1-6, 104-18; Eric M. Bergerud, *Touched With Fire: The Land War in the South Pacific* (New York: Viking Press, 1996). For a more comprehensive study of the attitudes of the American fighting man and the nature of combat in the Pacific theater, see Peter Schrijvers, *The GI War Against Japan: American Soldiers in Asia and the Pacific During World War II* (New York: New York University Press, 2002).

<sup>10</sup> Jay Luvaas, "Buna, 19 November 1942-2 January 1943: A 'Leavenworth Nightmare,'" in *America's First Battles, 1776-1965*, eds. Charles E. Heller and William A. Stofft (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 1986), 186-225; Edward J. Drea, *Defending the Driniumor: Covering Force Operations in New Guinea, 1944* (Fort Leavenworth, KS: Combat Studies Institute, 1984). In a note on p. 137, Drea actually poses a question about how combat training changed for U.S. forces in SWPA over time and admits that the issue "merits additional study."

<sup>11</sup> As noted exceptions, see Craig M. Cameron, *American Samurai: Myth, Imagination, and the Conduct of Battle in the First Marine Division, 1941-1951* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1994); and John Kennedy Ohl's biography of the commander of the 37th Infantry Division in *Minuteman: The Military Career of General Robert S. Beightler* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner, 2001). In John F. Shortal, *Forged By Fire: General Robert L. Eichelberger and the Pacific War* (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 1987), the author notes the importance of realistic training as it pertained to the development of Eichelberger as a corps and army commander in SWPA but does not examine the conduct of this training at the unit level.

There are also a number of unit histories of U.S. Army divisions that fought in the Pacific Theater. While valuable in many respects to the scholar, they are not analytical in nature and do not seek to address the historical questions pursued by this study. For example, see E. M. Flanagan, Jr., *The Angels: A History of the 11th Airborne Division* (Navato, CA: Presidio Press, 1989); William F. McCartney, *The Jungleers: A History of the 41st Infantry Division* (Washington, D.C.: Infantry Journal Press, 1948); and Bertram C. Wright, *The 1st Cavalry Division in World War II* (Tokyo: Tappan, 1947). Anthony Arthur, *Bushmasters: America's Jungle Warriors of World War II* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1987) is a regimental history.

<sup>12</sup> In *Closing With the Enemy*, Doubler addressed the difficulties of fighting in hedgerow country, fortifications, urban areas, and dense forests. He also covered the specific challenges of river-crossings and operating in cold weather.

<sup>13</sup> Of the eighteen divisions that saw combat in SWPA, ten had their origins in the National Guard and two more contained at least one regiment of Guardsmen in their ranks. James F. Dunnigan and Albert A. Nofi, *The Pacific War Encyclopedia* (New York: Checkmark Books, 1998), 436, 625-29.

<sup>14</sup> The language referring to organizational learning is taken from Brian A. Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, *Organizational Learning in Terrorist Groups and Its Implications for Combating Terrorism* (Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2005), 9-10. He defines organizational learning as "a process through which a group acquires new knowledge or technology that it then uses to make better strategic decisions, improve its ability to develop and apply specific tactics, and increase its chances of success in its operations." According to Jackson, organizational learning consists of four component subprocesses: acquisition, interpretation, distribution, and storage.

## **CHAPTER II**

### **THE TEXAS CAVALRY PREPARES FOR WAR**

In November 1940, the 112th Cavalry, a Texas National Guard regiment, entered federal service, initially for a one-year period. Struggling to equip and organize its men and their horses, the unit trained for the Louisiana Maneuvers in the summer of 1941. After having its inadequacies forcibly demonstrated in these large-scale exercises, it returned to its home station at Fort Clark, Texas, a quiet post near the Rio Grande. Congress had prolonged its federal service to eighteen months, but, after the attack on Pearl Harbor, this was extended indefinitely. With the outbreak of war, the 112th assumed the dual missions of border security and training for combat. It did both until July 1942, when the regiment deployed to New Caledonia, a small island in the South Pacific. There once again, it was assigned security duties as it prepared to meet the enemy at some future place in the Southwest Pacific.

The 112th's experience provides a useful means of studying the mobilization, training, and deployment of National Guard forces during World War II. While preparing for combat at stateside and overseas postings, the regiment conducted extensive training. Much of it, however, had limited value in light of the dismounted jungle fighting the cavalrymen would perform. Although the unit struggled with high personnel turnover in its enlisted and junior officer ranks, its senior leadership was established early – soon after the United States entered the war. Stability at this level became important as the 112th moved closer to the combat zone.

In the spring and summer of 1940, the U.S. Army executed a series of large-scale maneuvers, to which the looming prospect of war added a sense of urgency and relevance. These unprecedented corps exercises tested the practicality of significant organizational changes and helped to reconcile the concepts of mobility and firepower with new technology and

doctrine. For the first time, corps commanders integrated combat aviation into their operations and directed the tactical movement of mechanized and motorized formations over considerable distances. The maneuvers also enabled the Army to evaluate the utility of the horse cavalry in battle, as well as the performance of National Guard units. Neither fared well. The saving grace of cavalrymen was that they still proved somewhat valuable in reconnaissance. With respect to the National Guard, senior officers involved with the maneuvers believed that the state militias – from their commanders to their training and equipment – was in need of complete revamping.<sup>1</sup>

With the future of mounted forces in doubt and the Regulars' long-standing suspicions all but confirmed, the fate of National Guard cavalry units was not surprising. Though maintaining the Regular 1st and 2d Cavalry Divisions, the Army soon deactivated the four cavalry divisions in the National Guard and converted their regiments to field artillery, coast artillery, or hybrid horse-mechanized units. Only one of the existing nine National Guard cavalry brigades remained completely mounted. This was the 56th, a brigade from Texas and the parent organization of the 112th Cavalry Regiment.<sup>2</sup>

The 112th had entered active duty in November 1940 with little fanfare. Having expecting the call-up for some months, its leaders began intense local recruiting efforts in the autumn of 1940. The troop commander from Abilene inquired at high schools and colleges in his area for potential recruits. One young man tried to enlist with Troop C in Texarkana only to find that the unit had already met its quota. Undeterred, he traveled to Dallas and signed up with Troop A. The push to increase their numbers resulted in some units doubling their strength in the months just prior to induction.<sup>3</sup> Planning to be federalized for one year, elements of the regiment gathered in armories scattered across North and East Texas. After a week or so of rushing men through physical examinations and a limited issue of equipment, the regiment traveled by train to a staging area at Fort Bliss, where it would complete preparations and begin

initial training before the eventual move to the Mexican border to relieve units of the 1st Cavalry Division.

Since the call-up required the 112th to bolster its ranks from peacetime to wartime manning levels (nearly a 100 percent increase), leaders had to contend with the problem of integrating inexperienced officers and untrained recruits into their units. Major John Dunlap, commander of 1st Squadron, laid out the dilemma facing the regiment. After the 1940 maneuvers, the 112th contained thirty-eight officers (excluding the medical detachment and band). At induction, the number assigned rose to fifty-eight, but, in the interim, seven company-grade officers either resigned or were transferred. By inviting three officers to transfer from the organized reserves and promoting twenty more from its own enlisted ranks, the unit made up for this significant shortfall. In addition, two lieutenants came off of inactive National Guard status to join the 112th, and seven more from the same source were assigned to the regiment as excess. However, these recently inactive officers, in Dunlap's opinion, were substandard in many ways and would never become quality leaders. All told, over half of the unit's lieutenants had no prior experience as officers. Seven of its fourteen captains possessed less than two months time in grade. Finally, none of the 112th's officers had ever served on active duty outside of annual summer training, with the exception of six who had gone overseas during World War I.

Problems in the enlisted component were equally great. Many of the sergeants in the regiment had earned commissions in the organized reserves. Prior to federalization, they were able to maintain their commissions while serving in the National Guard as enlisted men, but a change in regulations soon prohibited this practice. The result was that the 112th lost several of its best NCOs, forced to depart in order to keep their reserve commissions. Another amendment to Army policy led to the discharge of soldiers whose civilian jobs were viewed as critical to the economy, men under twenty-one who had served for less than six months, and those of the three

lowest enlisted ranks who had dependents. In the first weeks after induction, Dunlap estimated that the regiment mustered roughly two-thirds of its authorized wartime complement of fifteen hundred men. Selectees eventually made up the shortage, but, as a result, about 70 percent of the unit's enlisted component consisted of raw recruits.<sup>4</sup>

Given the sizable influx of inexperienced personnel during its mobilization, the 112th Cavalry desperately needed training, but the two months at Fort Bliss did not provide this opportunity. Elements of the regiment arrived at the West Texas post on 28 November to find that the Army had done little to prepare for the Guardsmen's arrival. Spending a number of weeks without heat, running water, or electricity, the 112th hurried to complete its bivouac area. With the men engaged in building kitchens, latrines, and stables, training assumed a relatively low priority, despite the wishes of commanders to start running their troopers through military exercises. As the weather grew colder, many in this contingent of recent civilians and part-time soldiers fell sick due to the unfamiliar and rigorous environment. The regiment lacked critical weapons for training, having no mortars, no .50 caliber machine guns, and just half of its authorized quantity of light and heavy .30 caliber machine guns. Moreover, each rifle troop in this cavalry unit deployed to Fort Bliss with only thirty-two horses – 135 short of its wartime strength – while the newly created Special Weapons Troop had none of its 183 authorized mounts. Horses arrived gradually in the first few months of 1941, but the time required for breaking, shoeing, and clipping these new mounts certainly detracted from training.<sup>5</sup>

During its stay at Fort Bliss, the regiment was supposed to adhere to the guidelines prescribed by the War Department's Mobilization Training Plan (MTP) 2-1. This standardized program focused on basic soldier skills and charted a detailed course for units to follow over a thirteen-week period. After successfully completing this thorough individual training, the 112th was to begin the second phase, emphasizing training at the squad, platoon, and troop level,

integrated live fire exercises into the program, and culminated with regimental maneuvers. Apart from the various and persistent distractions affecting training, the demands of an ambitious training plan added to leaders' frustrations. As a squadron commander, Dunlap objected to the plan's excessive detail, which seemingly dictated how every minute of the soldier's day was to be spent. Needless to say, the Army designed the program for a fully manned and properly equipped unit. With obvious disdain, Dunlap stated, "training progressed very unsatisfactorily, but we had to prepare and submit schedules each week showing that we were going along under the provisions of MTP 2-1 and progressing beautifully – a lot of hooey and white wash."<sup>6</sup> For the 112th, the execution of MTP 2-1 was somewhat impractical for another reason – the regiment expected to receive its first contingent of draftees halfway into the initial phase of the program. This ill-timed integration of manpower would delay the start of unit exercises until all of the new men concluded individual skills training. In any case, the 112th's deployment to the Mexican frontier and its focus on border security delayed the completion of phase two until the late spring of 1941.

In early February, the regiment moved to Fort Clark, where it relieved elements of the 1st Cavalry Division and assumed its position in a string of outposts along the Rio Grande. Approximately 120 miles west of San Antonio and some twenty miles from the border, Fort Clark became the permanent home of the 112th until it departed for service in the Pacific about fifteen months later. The secluded fort outside the small Texas town of Brackettville had a distinctive "Old Army" flavor. The first sergeant of Troop A at the time remembered the green lawns and pretty flowers that dotted the grounds, as well as the golf course and the swimming pool by a nearby creek. Duty at Fort Clark was easy-going, and the troopers found some of the comforts they had gone without since federalization. Besides the mess halls and heated barracks, there were officer and NCO quarters, which soon became occupied with families as the unit



settled in to garrison life. During its first months on the border, the 112th approached its wartime authorization for personnel and horses. The first selectees to join the regiment were mostly native Texans and fit in well with the core of Guardsmen in the unit. However, the military experience of these men amounted to little more than a few days in a reception center, so the chain of command formed special cadre of NCOs – a provisional “selectee training troop” – to administer their basic training.<sup>7</sup>

Leaving a detachment to man the post at Brackettville, the 112th returned in late May by train and truck convoy to Fort Bliss. There, it participated in field exercises that pitted the 56th Brigade against the Regulars of the 1st Cavalry Division. This was intense training designed to prepare both units for the upcoming maneuvers in Louisiana. Operating in the mountainous terrain north and east of Fort Bliss, the regiment conducted a series of cavalry missions – screening, reconnaissance, attack, and defense – that tested the stamina of its horses and men. On hand to observe the exercises, Lieutenant General Walter Krueger, commander of Third Army, commended the Guardsmen but warned them of the rigors that lay in store for them in the humid, mosquito-infested forests of Louisiana.<sup>8</sup>

Undertaken with the primary objective of developing techniques in the handling of large units, the maneuvers of August and September 1941 consisted of force-on-force exercises at corps and field army level. For the first time in the United States, the Army integrated an armored division and paratroopers into operations. At their peak, the forces involved included roughly six hundred thousand soldiers. With this massive deployment of manpower and equipment, the focus of lessons learned was mainly directed at the higher levels of command, where leaders became familiar with combined arms operations and the management of sizable mechanized and motorized units. Reflecting on the Army’s inexperience, Krueger wrote, “These

maneuvers . . . gave us the first chance we have ever had of coordinating infantry, artillery, armored forces, anti-tank forces, antiaircraft forces and air forces of magnitude.”<sup>9</sup>

To the most senior commanders supervising the exercises, the horse cavalry seemed an anachronism. For Krueger, this meant he had to watch the mounted units closely rather than ignore them. On at least one occasion, he inspected the bivouac areas of the 56th Brigade, where he inquired as to the condition of the unit’s horses after a month of arduous field exercises. To the cavalymen, the effects of the physically demanding training were readily apparent. Marches at night and through rain and mud wore heavily on the horses. They lost weight, developed saddle sores, and contracted other maladies, while almost continuous movement interfered with their proper care. On one occasion, the 112th lost nineteen mounts from exhaustion when the Texas Guardsmen marched 125 miles in a period of twenty-eight hours. Acting in conjunction with the 2d Armored Division during corps-level maneuvers in mid-August, troopers of the 56th realized just how difficult it was to keep pace with the tankers. The maneuvers director, General Lesley J. McNair, recognized this as well and later informed the Secretary of War that the horse cavalry had not proven its value in the exercises, even in the task of reconnaissance.<sup>10</sup>

Like the cavalry, commanders demonstrated shortcomings as well. In 1941, the Army’s corporate knowledge of combined arms operations was anything but extensive. This lack of expertise became most pronounced at the middle echelons, where many leaders struggled to manage unfamiliar attached units and weapons systems. Pushing commanders to the limits of their ability, the maneuvers exposed officers unqualified for the positions they held, and many were relieved in the months following the exercises. Krueger’s patience eroded after observing units make the same errors throughout the two months of field training. The umpires’ recurring criticisms regarding aggressiveness, wear of equipment, march discipline, and tactical dispersion reflected poorly on the senior leaders of several units and, in particular, contributed to the relief

of Colonel Clarence Parker, the 112th's commander. Krueger replaced him with Colonel Harry Johnson, a hard-boiled officer from the unit's sister regiment, the 124th Cavalry.<sup>11</sup>

Although corps and army staffs learned many lessons in Louisiana, the benefits of the exercises at the lower levels were ambiguous. Small units turned out to be little more than "training aids" for commanders wrestling with the challenges of combined arms operations. McNair admitted that proficiency at the lower echelons did not improve during the course of large-scale maneuvers. One senior observer even believed that basic skills deteriorated as soldiers in battalions and companies became careless and developed bad habits.<sup>12</sup>

Without a doubt, the men of the 112th experienced the hardships of fast-paced campaigning in harsh conditions, but the exercises provided limited opportunities for troops, platoons, and squads to hone their tactical skills. Though its total assigned strength approached authorized levels, the regiment was woefully undermanned in the field. John Dunlap, now the 112th's executive officer, noted on 14 September 1941 at the start of army-versus-army maneuvers that the unit was operating at half-strength, its rifle troops containing an average of sixty-five men out of an authorized 151. For one phase of the exercises, the unit detached fifteen lieutenants to serve as umpires for another cavalry regiment. While all of this certainly dampened the value of training, the 112th also had trouble controlling the men on hand, and many apparently took brief unapproved leaves of absence whenever it suited them, especially those who had relatives in the local area. Disgusted with this flagrant indiscipline, Dunlap determined at one point that the regiment could not account for over one hundred soldiers.

The basic nature of the deficiencies identified by the 112th's senior leaders during a critique mid-way through the maneuvers suggests that the unit learned little in the way of combat training. Commanders admonished their subordinates for the inferior personal appearance of their men and for maintaining disorderly bivouac sites. Concerned about the condition of the

regiment's mounts, they accused soldiers of improper grooming, calling it a product of laziness. Finally, leaders sought to improve the unit's march discipline, expressing concern – not for tactical considerations – but with troopers dropping out of formation at their leisure to get water.<sup>13</sup>

The 112th Cavalry returned to Fort Clark in early October 1941 and resumed training, focusing on horse reconditioning and basic individual skills. During the maneuvers, the men of the regiment were informed that Congress had extended their federal service from one year to eighteen months. To offset this distressing news, the Army instituted a policy allowing the discharge of individuals, and, under this criteria, the unit began releasing selected troopers at a rate of up to 15 percent of its authorized strength per month. This practice continued for only a short time, ending with the attack on Pearl Harbor.<sup>14</sup>

In the meantime, additional draftees joined the 112th. These incoming soldiers reported from the Cavalry School at Fort Riley, Kansas. They had received a fair amount of training prior to their arrival on the Mexican border, and their quality was comparable to many of the troopers already with the unit. Significantly, recruits assigned to the regiment after the fall of 1941 were predominantly from the Midwest and Northeast. The loss of veterans and the integration of new men from outside the state caused a change in the demographics of the outfit. By November, Texans made up only 65 percent of the brigade to which the 112th was assigned. This situation gave rise to some tension between the core of Texas Guardsmen who continued to dominate the regiment and the recently arrived “outsiders.”<sup>15</sup> Although this rivalry existed in varying degrees at Fort Clark, its real effect on unit cohesion and performance is hard to discern. With the 112th becoming more mixed over time, this specific source of friction gradually dissipated and evaporated completely when the regiment entered combat.<sup>16</sup>

Regardless of the stir the arrival of the “Yankee” selectees may have caused, it almost certainly paled in comparison to the regimental change of command that occurred during the same period. Soon after returning to Brackettville, Harry Johnson was called away to the 1st Cavalry Division to take command of one of its brigades.<sup>17</sup> Coming off duty as a senior umpire in the Louisiana Maneuvers, his replacement, Colonel Julian W. Cunningham, reported to the 112th in mid-November 1941 and remained at the head of the organization throughout World War II. An “Old Army” disciplinarian, the new commander meant business, and it showed in the way he interacted with subordinates and approached the training of a regiment preparing for war.

The colonel’s fiery temper and unremitting demand for high standards characterized his style of command.<sup>18</sup> In the eyes of his men, Cunningham was a martinet. Coming off as neither warm nor friendly, he was extremely difficult to please. Most troopers responded to his style with either intense resentment or mild terror. Young officers were especially loath to cross his path. In garrison, the colonel became riled at the slightest discrepancy and carried a riding crop for added effect. By all accounts, Cunningham checked his soldiers thoroughly and often, consistently holding them to high standards. Throughout the war, entries in the regimental diary attest to the frequency of these inspections, as well as to the rarity of instances when the commander expressed satisfaction with the results. Cunningham’s temper logically accompanied his demanding leadership. Working side by side with him, staff officer Philip L. Hooper described his commander as “very mission-oriented.” At times, this favorable quality was carried to its ugly extreme, resulting in ill-concealed frustration when the demand for excellence in training and on the battlefield went unfulfilled.<sup>19</sup>

Nevertheless, those closest to the 112th’s commander respected him deeply, and even the officers who disliked him recognized the advantages of his forceful leadership. As a trusted

staff officer who worked closely with Cunningham, Hooper saw firsthand that his commander cared intensely for the men, growing emotionally attached to them after the regiment began to suffer casualties in combat. Lieutenant Judson Chubbuck, aide-de-camp after Cunningham's promotion to brigadier general, also admired the commander and his ability to combine competence with a genuine concern for soldiers. Though by no means generous in their praise, several senior leaders in the 112th conceded that Cunningham's demand for hard work and discipline paid great dividends. Colonel Alexander Miller, who suffered a considerable portion of his commander's wrath, nonetheless held the general in high esteem, calling him "a fine soldier" who "whipped us into shape." Once overseas, even officers disgusted by Cunningham's personality respected his endeavors to keep their men occupied with tough training. As a leader, he took pains to protect himself – "to make sure he was covered," according to one squadron commander – but, in the process, his efforts seemed to "cover" the regiment as well.<sup>20</sup>

Regardless of whether they liked him, Cunningham's subordinates never accused him of incompetence. Fairness seemed to characterize the general's leadership as well, for, in spite of his mercurial temper, he rarely relieved anyone from command. One officer attributed the infrequent resort to firing in the 112th to an understanding – at regimental level – of the difficulties and realities of combat, as well as an acceptance on the part of Cunningham to withstand pressure from his superiors when they accused his units of not acting aggressively.<sup>21</sup>

Although it routinely irritated his men, the commander's hard-headedness benefited his troopers at times. On these occasions, Cunningham demonstrated his sincere concern for the regiment. Philip Hooper recalled that, when the unit reported to Fort Bliss under Colonel Clarence Parker prior to the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers, Guardsmen were barred from using the officers' club. "We didn't have a Cunningham," said Hooper. "Parker . . . didn't have that spark to fight for us."<sup>22</sup> This humiliation contrasted sharply with the treatment encountered in 1944

when Sixth Army reluctantly awarded the Combat Infantryman's Badge to the cavalymen of the 112th after the fiery Cunningham – by that time a brigadier general – pressed the issue. Later, in the fierce struggle on the Driniumor River, Cunningham spurned his superiors' recommendation that he control the battle from a command post away from serious danger. His decision to accompany his soldiers into combat made him the only general at the front during the thick of the fighting. Cunningham's presence raised the morale of his men, and his ability to forcefully communicate the reality of the situation to higher headquarters helped to avert disaster in what was at the time a largely misunderstood battle.<sup>23</sup>

In a 1948 letter to his wartime aide-de-camp, Cunningham made clear the intent of his leadership and revealed his caring attitude toward the men. “At the risk of sounding a little conceited,” the general wrote, “I repeat what I always said in the 112th – ‘You can demand anything within reason from the American soldier if he feels you are . . . looking out for him.’ In other words, take care of his food, housing, entertainment, etc. and they [*sic*] will react to high standards favorably – not only that but in the end brag about how tough the outfit is.” He went on to instruct his former aide, who was assuming command of a National Guard battery, to “work up to your standards gradually. . . . [B]e strict but reasonable. . . . Make sure your officers really know their stuff.”<sup>24</sup> Cunningham concisely expressed this blend of heartfelt concern and unapologetic toughness in a letter to the preceding commander of the 112th: “You may rest assured that I am taking care of my good officers and still trying to build a fire under the complacent individuals.”<sup>25</sup>

Cunningham remained with the 112th for the entire war, either as its commander or as the commander of the regimental combat team built around it. Though he earned a temporary promotion to brigadier general in September 1943, Cunningham did not advance beyond that rank until after the conflict, and at no time did he command a division – or a brigade for that

matter – in combat.<sup>26</sup> Yet, by the same token, his superiors never sought his relief, retaining him in command of one of the three separate regiments to fight in the Southwest Pacific. Indeed, on multiple occasions, Sixth Army and the different corps that controlled the 112th at one time or another relied on Cunningham to conduct independent operations. Moreover, higher headquarters formed expedient task forces around the regiment. Often named “Baldy Force” after Cunningham’s most distinctive physical feature, these ad hoc organizations sometimes put five battalion-sized units under the general’s control. Though no superstar, he was a solid commander who possessed the confidence of those senior to him.

After the attack on Pearl Harbor, the focus of the 112th shifted for the moment from training to border security. Soon after the news, the regiment cancelled all furloughs and dispatched a platoon to a key crossing point on the Rio Grande. Within two weeks, the unit established a routine and increased the guard force to two reinforced rifle troops, manning multiple platoon and squad outposts along the border in order to protect several bridges and a local airfield from saboteurs. The men constructed fighting positions on both sides of the river and integrated machine guns and mortars into their defense. Although it was a commitment that involved approximately one-third of the regiment’s strength, the practice of securing the border contained substantial training value. It not only gave junior officers an opportunity to execute with some autonomy a real mission but also tested the unit’s ability to manage a dispersed operation and communicate over long distances.<sup>27</sup>

Once the initial panic following Pearl Harbor subsided and leaders became accustomed to the requirements of guarding the Mexican frontier, the 112th began to prepare for war with renewed vigor. As the regimental operations officer, Captain Philip Hooper pieced together the details. A standout in the 112th, Hooper advanced from the rank of lieutenant to temporary colonel in the space of four years. Although rapid promotion within the same regiment created



some hard feelings among National Guard officers whom he bypassed, his competence allowed critics little room for complaint. A second lieutenant in a rifle troop at the time of induction, Hooper had demonstrated enough ability to earn a position on the regimental staff and was serving as the acting operations officer (or S-3) when Cunningham arrived at Fort Clark. The new commander recognized his extraordinary talents and ended up keeping the young officer (he was twenty-six when he met Cunningham) at his side throughout the war. To the troopers, Hooper was the regiment's renowned sharpshooter, whose proficiency with a rifle became legendary. However, as S-3 and later as executive officer, he managed the intricate details and necessary coordination for Cunningham, working "behind the scenes" to ensure success for the unit. Hooper also saw himself as a buffer between the temperamental, highly demanding Cunningham and his sometimes frustrated and resentful subordinates. "I acted as his pin cushion," he recalled glibly.<sup>28</sup> Alexander Miller, often a beneficiary of this intercession, remembered Hooper's uncanny "ability to smooth ruffled feathers" among the leadership of the 112th.<sup>29</sup> Undoubtedly, his skill in dealing with people served the regiment well. As Cunningham wrote from New Caledonia to one of his colleagues, "Hooper is as energetic as ever and has made many friends with personnel of the Army, Navy and Marine Corps. We like to have them at camp."<sup>30</sup> Historian Robert Ross Smith interviewed the personable officer after the war and noted, "Hooper has an almost photographic memory and an amazing amount of knowledge about all branches and equipment of the army, from bakeries to bazookas. He proved most helpful."<sup>31</sup> In the aftermath of Pearl Harbor, it fell upon Hooper to organize a training plan that would prepare the 112th Cavalry for war.

Guidance from the Department of the Army reflected the lessons of the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers, revealing that small units began the exercises at substandard training levels and finished them without noticeable improvement. To correct this shortcoming, General

Headquarters instituted a more standardized training program and shifted its emphasis to mastering basic tactical skills. Planners developed uniform proficiency tests for infantry battalions and platoons Army-wide. Where once attention had been focused on the integration of tank, antitank, and air elements into the operations of large units, it now centered on the infantry-artillery team at regimental level and below. According to one student of the 1941 exercises in Louisiana, “the motto of the post-maneuvers training period might well have been ‘back to basics.’”<sup>32</sup>

After adjusting to the requirements of its post-Pearl Harbor border security mission, the 112th Cavalry published a memorandum that outlined the scope and intent of its training from January to May 1942. The program envisioned the successive training of units from squad to regiment, with critiques following all exercises and tests administered after the completion of each phase. Before beginning squad training, however, NCOs were to teach individual troopers common tasks, like first aid, field sanitation, and weapons maintenance, ensuring that their charges knew how to “march, shoot, and obey.” The memorandum directed leaders to conduct training over difficult terrain, stressing defensive methods against tanks and aircraft and donning gas masks on occasion. Depending on the availability of ammunition, platoon training was to culminate with a live fire exercise. The regiment would also schedule weapons ranges as time and ammunition stocks allowed. Throughout the four-month program, units were to work on horsemanship, tactical movement, reconnaissance, and both the mounted and dismounted attack and defense. The regiment was to organize and run internal schools to instruct its officers and NCOs in somewhat advanced topics, such as issuing combat orders, patrolling, using a compass, and map reading. In accordance with a War Department directive, unit commanders were to institute a program designed to periodically inform their soldiers about the international situation. The memorandum also specified that units conduct conditioning marches of

increasing severity, implement mass athletics, regularly brief soldiers on the international situation, and execute two formal ceremonies per week – one mounted, one dismounted.<sup>33</sup> Given the plan's ambitious design and the training distractions imposed on the unit, it is surprising that the regiment followed the essential framework of the training as closely as it did.

After spending some weeks on individual skills, the 112th moved into the collective phase of its training. Squad evaluations took place in February over a period of two weeks. After spending the first five days on horsemanship testing, rifle squads participated in patrol problems, where troopers demonstrated their abilities in land navigation, communications, tactical movement, and establishing a defensive position. Following a week of preparing for their evaluations, platoons competed with one another during their testing phase, concluding with a twenty-four-mile reconnaissance mission under simulated combat conditions and a choreographed live fire exercise. For the rifle troops, the regiment set aside a week in late March to rotate one unit per day through a twenty-five-mile maneuver across "enemy territory." On the march, the troops stressed security, practicing defensive techniques against mechanized forces and aircraft. In keeping with standard procedure, a section from Machine gun Troop reinforced each unit. Squadrons spent much of April preparing for their tests, external evaluations controlled by Third Army and administered by a team from the 1st Cavalry Division. In training for these events, squadrons conducted force-on-force maneuvers and practiced night operations. The test required each squadron to march out one afternoon, bivouac for the evening, and launch an attack at dawn.<sup>34</sup> Reports in the *Centaur*, Fort Clark's newspaper, suggest that the exercises fell short of their intent. Although it is impossible to know just how difficult they were for the troopers who conducted them, the duration and intensity of the exercises do not appear to be particularly taxing, and the tasks involved seem rather elementary.

All the same, the 112th achieved a major training objective by completing evaluations up to squadron level.

The regiment, sometimes with the unwanted assistance of higher headquarters managed to jam many other events into this progression of training from squad to squadron. Just before platoon exercises began, eighteen officers and enlisted men from Third Army descended upon Fort Clark to conduct a three-day inspection. More than a minor disruption, the team evaluated a host of areas throughout the unit, to include uniforms, horses, equipment, and the barracks. Inspectors assessed the level of proficiency in each of the staff sections and looked at the state of chemical defense training in three platoons. The whirlwind evaluation culminated with a twenty-four-hour tactical exercise calling for the troops of 1st Squadron to move ten to fifteen miles and conduct reconnaissance missions against each other throughout the day.<sup>35</sup>

Marksmanship received special emphasis during the regiment's months of preparation at Fort Clark. Hooper identified weapons training as one of the unit's more successful endeavors, and Ernest Kelley, a young machine gunner in Troop A, specifically remembered the enormous amount of time devoted to learning everything about one's weapon – basic maintenance, its assembly and disassembly, and the actions to take when it jammed.<sup>36</sup>

The regiment began the transition from the M-1903 Springfield rifle to the M-1 Garand just prior to Pearl Harbor and planned to conduct its first live fire with the new weapon in early December. To prepare for this significant event, the regiment trained all officers and four NCOs per troop on the use of the weapon and proper range procedures. After receiving this standardized instruction, these soldiers were to teach the men in their individual units. To maximize the number of personnel at the training, the 112th discontinued all furloughs during its time on the range. The schedule called for roughly fifteen hundred troopers to fire eighty rounds with the M-1 rifle. In addition to qualifying most of its men on the new weapon, the regiment

also intended to familiarize selected personnel in the firing of heavy and light machine guns, Thompson Submachine guns (SMGs), 81-mm mortars, and pistols. Machine gun training was to take place on the standard one thousand-inch (or twenty-seven-yard) range.

Following the Japanese attack on 7 December and the brief disruption in the training schedule that resulted, the *Centaur* reported on 20 December that 869 troopers fired the M-1 Garand, with seven hundred of them qualifying. The men who shot the weapon were enthusiastic about its accuracy. However, because of reasons related to the “international situation,” 220 soldiers could only partially qualify and 282 were not able to fire the M-1 at all. The *Centaur* made no mention of the execution of the other previously planned weapons training.<sup>37</sup>

The next iteration of live firing occurred in late February, when the regiment scheduled rifle and light machine gun ranges during a pause in the collective training timetable. Through the first week of March, the unit ensured that all members of its .30 caliber machine gun crews gained some experience in shooting their assigned weapon. More importantly, commanders identified approximately three hundred troopers who had not fired at least ten rounds with the M-1 and sent them to the range to get familiarized with the new rifle. Live fire training culminated with platoon exercises in a test conducted by the 56th Cavalry Brigade. In this evaluation, a platoon with a light machine gun squad moved forward as part of a covering force, deployed on line, and engaged an enemy position. Each trooper fired forty rounds at silhouette targets, and each machine gun expended 150 rounds.<sup>38</sup> All told, the 112th did not conduct live fire training to the extent that one would expect from a unit preparing for war. This seems to be especially true regarding mortars and heavy machine guns, since the *Centaur* – meticulous in its reporting of training related to other weapon systems – fails to mention them after November 1941.<sup>39</sup>

In accordance with the published training program, the regiment established internal schools to improve the tactical and technical expertise of its junior leaders, especially the sergeants. NCO education did more than develop competence. It also allowed commanders to assess the potential of leaders for advancement. The 112th formalized this screening process by administering a rigorous battery of examinations throughout the month of March 1942. For four nights a week, all sergeants in the regiment took written tests in a variety of military subjects, to include horsemanship, dismounted close order drill, encrypted message writing, use of the M-1 rifle, squad and platoon tactics, land navigation, map reading, and field sanitation. During the time at Fort Clark, officers made it a priority to fill the NCO ranks with qualified men. Having competent junior leaders was, of course, essential to the overall training process. For example, in the cases of marksmanship and chemical defense, the regiment provided standardized instruction to a cadre of selected lieutenants and sergeants from the troops and then relied upon them to teach these skills to the lower enlisted men (the “train-the-trainer” concept in modern U.S. military parlance).<sup>40</sup>

To efficiently disseminate the components of tactical and technical expertise, the 112th also relied on training films provided by Army Ground Forces (AGF). As John Sloan Brown points out in *Draftee Division*, this medium harnessed the technology on hand to ensure “uniform instruction at a time when qualified instructors were spread so thinly. Films also gave troops vicarious exposure to equipment too valuable or too scarce for allocation to training camps.”<sup>41</sup> According to one AGF memorandum, these educational tools were intended to “hold the interest of trainees long accustomed to viewing the finest Hollywood productions.”<sup>42</sup> Though the regimental operations officer boasted that classroom instruction was kept to a minimum, the unit evidently made considerable use of Fort Clark’s movie theater. With films

available on all kinds of military subjects the 112th at one point planned to rotate selected audiences through the post's squadron-sized theater on an almost weekly basis.<sup>43</sup>

As per the War Department's guidance, the 112th's senior leadership made a serious effort to keep its men informed about the international situation and America's role. Commanders ordered detailed world maps and posted them in unit day rooms, so troopers could better understand news from the war's various fronts. Later, the regimental intelligence section gathered the information on the conflict from several daily newspapers and periodicals and published daily bulletins that summarized this information for interested soldiers. The unit also coordinated a series of weekly orientation lectures designed not only to keep the men up to date on the course of the war but also to focus attention on why the United States was fighting. Open to all ranks, these hour-long presentations were given by troop commanders, university professors, or American businessmen and covered a wide array of subjects, including the Munich settlement, the Battle of Britain, the fall of France, and the Far East. Evidently, leaders intended the lectures to demonstrate the differences between the Allied and Axis powers. Although the impact these efforts had on morale and overall awareness is uncertain, that the unit made a determined attempt to raise both is fairly clear.<sup>44</sup>

Despite the importance that the 112th presumably gave to collective training, many cavalymen missed portions of the troop and squadron exercises in order to attend special courses, often away from Fort Clark. The unit sent soldiers to this instruction most likely to meet quotas set by higher headquarters, but leaders of the regiment probably also understood the value of familiarizing certain men with skills related to combat. In March (around the same time as troop exercises), approximately 40 soldiers attended a brigade-run intelligence school at another Texas border post. For two weeks, these selected individuals learned a variety of reconnaissance skills. In April, the 112th conducted a month-long drivers' training program for

30 to 40 men and later sent 15 soldiers to motor transport school. Seventeen others attended motorcycle training at brigade headquarters. About 50 troopers missed squadron evaluations in order to participate in four days of demolitions training. Another 21 privates departed just prior to squadron exercises in April to attend a three-month course in radio operations. Taken individually, these opportunities for instruction were minor distractions and most likely did not have significant repercussions on unit training. However, it is important to note that learning special skills beyond the regiment's ability to teach required commanders to consider the costs and excuse men from crucial unit exercises.<sup>45</sup>

The 112th's status as horse cavalry shaped the focus of training and substantially affected how soldiers occupied their time. The regiment's primary tactical missions of screening and reconnaissance demanded that its troopers be excellent horsemen. But aside from a meeting engagement or the occasional pistol charge, cavalrymen expected to fight dismounted and thus were required to learn infantry tactics.<sup>46</sup> The 112th had to master three sets of skills – mounted reconnaissance, mounted combat, and dismounted combat – and therefore ran the risk of being inadequate in all of them.

The presence of horses restricted the regiment's training schedule. According to Hooper, "You had to feed them every morning. You had to groom them. You had to keep them shod, and you had to exercise them. Therefore, you didn't have the liberty of just doing what you necessarily wanted to do."<sup>47</sup> For cavalrymen, care of saddle equipment was as essential as weapons maintenance. In garrison, attending to the horses generally accounted for most of the training during the morning. "Now, in the afternoon," Hooper recalled, "you could have a couple of hours of map reading or . . . dismounted patrolling. . . . But basically you were out with those horses."<sup>48</sup> Sometimes, this devotion was self-inflicted. In February and again in April, for example, the regiment held extensive horse shows, including competitions among platoons,



machine gun squads, and “horseshoers.”<sup>49</sup> This enormous imposition on time aside, many cavalymen, Hooper included, believed that “the training value of horses” supplied troopers with “a confidence not available to . . . infantrymen.”<sup>50</sup>

While horses may have bolstered discipline and morale, high personnel turnover certainly tempered this benefit and, unfortunately, disrupted training as well. After the regiment’s return from the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers, 250 troopers were released from active duty. In January, the bulk of them were recalled. This relatively rapid influx of soldiers helped to replenish unit strength but inhibited the 112th’s efforts to form cohesive teams in its troops and platoons. More importantly, the regiment suffered a gradual drain on its manpower over the next six months. Transfers to the Air Corps and to Officer Candidate School (OCS) may have resulted in a 10 to 15 percent loss in assigned strength – by a conservative estimate.<sup>51</sup> These losses were later made good, but the value of the training conducted at Fort Clark must be considered in light of the fact that many who went through it were soon detached from the regiment.

Since the attack on Pearl Harbor, the 112th had spent seven months at Fort Clark seeking to train at the same time it performed its border security mission. While suffering from a slow, continual drain on manpower, the unit managed to prepare junior leaders for increased responsibility and to forge cohesive teams from its original Texas Guardsmen and recently arrived selectees. Though it hindered exercises at the squadron and regimental level, patrolling and manning outposts along the Rio Grande reinforced this facet of preparing for combat. Whether draftees or Guardsmen, mounted or dismounted, soldiers came to know the capabilities of their weapons and each other. Most importantly, there emerged a solid core of senior leaders who would later guide the regiment through its most challenging combat experiences in the Southwest Pacific.

Nevertheless, there were some glaring deficiencies in the 112th's preparation. Like many units training to fight the Axis, the 112th had no practice working with air power. Neither did it gain any experience operating with tanks. Finally, unlike a division-sized element, the separate regiment had no organic field artillery and, stationed by itself at Fort Clark, had no real opportunity to develop the critical skill of coordinating artillery fire. A strength in most units, the artillery-infantry (or artillery-cavalry) team did not exist in the 112th. The regiment carried these significant weaknesses with it as it departed for the South Pacific.

Around the middle of June, the unit received notice of its impending deployment to the Pacific Theater. Relieved shortly thereafter from its duties on the Mexican border, the 112th prepared to leave Fort Clark. It took steps to fill supply shortages, issued tropical clothing and new helmets to its men, and administered immunizations for yellow fever and typhoid.<sup>52</sup> Most importantly, the regiment gave up its mounts but deployed with the full complement of its horse-related equipment. Realizing that their assignment to the Pacific would probably entail fighting in unfamiliar terrain, senior leaders did what they could to prepare their troopers. Securing a few copies of U.S. Army *Field Manual 31-20*, entitled *Jungle Warfare*, Hooper covered its contents in an ad hoc school for NCOs and officers. Over the course of several days, the regimental operations officer read aloud to his captive audience from the seventy-page War Department publication. As it turned out, the manual offered only a small amount of sound tactical advice. In retrospect, Hooper believed that "the manual did very little good and probably some harm in that it contained more 'don'ts' than solutions. It had a tendency to build a negative feeling about the jungle, coupled with a fear of one's ability to survive. Snakes, poisonous plants, and disease characterized the material."<sup>53</sup>

On the evening of 8 July 1942, the 112th moved by train to its port of embarkation on the West Coast, arriving near San Francisco after a three-day journey. The regiment established

a bivouac site at Camp Stoneman for a week to complete its final preparations. During this time, the unit conducted several forced conditioning marches and received instruction in first aid, chemical defense, and bayonet training. Two days after performing a dismounted review for the post's commanding general, the 112th entrained and traveled fifty miles to San Francisco, where it boarded the U.S. Army Transport *President Grant* and sailed for the South Pacific on 21 July.<sup>54</sup>

The three-week voyage was uneventful for the most part. Fighting off seasickness and enduring second-rate rations, the troopers spent their days combating monotony. Colonel Cunningham assisted his soldiers by keeping them busy with guard and kitchen details. In accordance with standard security procedure, the regiment positioned and manned some of their heavy weapons on the open deck of the ship. Leaders also ran their men through air raid and anti-submarine drills. At some point, the cavalymen learned what Cunningham had been told at Camp Stoneman – the 112th was headed for Allied-occupied New Caledonia to serve in that island's defense force. In the last days of the journey, a British cruiser assumed escort duties for the *President Grant* and later reported the detection of an enemy submarine. Nothing came of this encounter, save the regiment and the ship's company passing the night on alert. Two days later, on 11 August 1942, the 112th reached its destination.<sup>55</sup>

A cigar-shaped island 250 miles in length, the French colony of New Caledonia was located approximately eight hundred miles east of the Australian coast and about the same distance south of Guadalcanal. Far from the battles developing in the Solomon Islands, the regiment was quickly able to set up a relatively comfortable camp in the Dumbea River Valley. Concrete-floored, wooden-framed, and screened buildings accommodated kitchens, mess halls, aid stations, and even an officers' club. Beginning in early September, the 112th showed movies on a regular basis and, every month or two, its leaders put on dances (there were French women

and American nurses on the island) for both officers and enlisted men. The regimental band added a touch of class to these occasions. Band concerts and poker games occupied the remainder of troopers' leisure time. Within a month of debarking, the unit established a routine of Saturday inspections, weekly dismounted drill, and frequent organized athletics.<sup>56</sup>

Upon its arrival in New Caledonia, the 112th became part of Admiral William F. Halsey's Southern Pacific Command (SOPAC) and fell under the direct control of Major General Alexander McC. Patch, in charge of the island's overall defense.<sup>57</sup> Receiving Australian horses soon after its arrival, the regiment began to dispatch elements on distant reconnaissance missions from their base in the southeast corner of the island. Located south of the Tropic of Capricorn, temperate New Caledonia had a mixture of open, wooded, and mountainous topography. Generally rugged, the terrain was crossed by unimproved roads that connected several small towns. Several small islets lay offshore, and many potential landing beaches dotted the coast. The 112th was not alone on New Caledonia, for it served as a staging and support base for thousands of American soldiers. Many French civilian officials and military units were stationed there as well.<sup>58</sup>

The cavalrymen assumed responsibility for a sub-sector of the island's overall defense. They manned a system of observation posts (OPs) and established defensive positions at various locations, to be occupied in the event of enemy attack. Some of these were quite sophisticated, even containing dummy emplacements. Selected units went on reconnaissance missions by foot, horse, and scout car to investigate beaches, roads, and cross-country routes. In one month, extensive patrolling and support of the OP system resulted in the unit logging over fifty-five thousand miles on its vehicles. After securing the assistance of naval or engineer units on New Caledonia, the 112th also began routine boat patrols to offshore islands. The regiment's duties on New Caledonia required its senior leaders to operate in conjunction with other units – a task

that had not confronted them in their relative isolation at Fort Clark. Periodically, Cunningham visited adjacent French units and coordinated his sector defense with American tank and field artillery battalions.

Although it pursued its defensive mission with vigor, the regiment had no contact with the enemy, the only tense moments coming in October 1942 due to an air raid warning and in March 1943 after an alleged submarine spotting. On the first occasion, the unit went on full alert and remained dispersed for five hours, manning every heavy weapon, from vehicle-mounted machine guns to mortars and 37-mm antitank guns. The air attack never materialized, however. After a French unit reported the fleeting presence of a submarine offshore, the regiment dispatched a truck-mounted patrol of over twenty men to investigate but found nothing.<sup>59</sup>

As expected, the 112th focused its training on the performance of its primary mission on New Caledonia. From the end of August until February 1943, the unit held exercises every few weeks to enhance its ability to repel a Japanese invasion. Alerted at 0200 or 0300, squadrons would move several miles in the early morning darkness from their bivouac site by foot or on horseback to one of the regiment's three prepared positions overlooking the beaches and brace for an imagined enemy attack. Executed under the watchful eyes of Colonel Cunningham, these drills were always timed and usually lasted until mid-morning, when the day's regularly scheduled training would begin. The colonel also used these exercises to test his subordinate leaders, sometimes putting his executive officer or a squadron commander in charge of the regiment for the duration of the alert.

In addition to these unexpected mobilizations, the 112th conducted several squadron-sized field problems. Although units sometimes followed attack scenarios, most exercises placed the troopers on the defensive alongside riverbanks or in their prepared positions along the coast. Adding to the realism, squadrons operated with some of the attachments they could

expect in combat, such as a platoon of heavy machine guns, a mortar section, and a couple of 37-mm towed antitank guns. When it had units available, the regiment provided an opposing force to enhance the training, and, at least once, leaders incorporated live fire into a squadron defense by setting up a target range on an unoccupied island offshore. The 112th also worked with field artillery and tank battalions stationed temporarily on New Caledonia, but these combined arms exercises were infrequent and appear not to have involved live firing. Typically, these squadron field problems occurred during daylight hours, but, sometimes, units spent the night away from their permanent campsite. Only in rare instances did they gain experience in night movement and field craft. In mid-February, the regiment participated in an extensive island defense exercise that included tank units, a field artillery battalion, and French military forces. This event seems to have been the last of its kind on New Caledonia. With fighting on Guadalcanal drawing to a close and the danger of a Japanese thrust to the south eliminated, the importance of island defense faded, and the 112th concentrated on other tasks.<sup>60</sup>

Weapons training received particular emphasis during the regiment's stay in the French colony, and the unit had multiple opportunities to fire every piece of ordnance in its arsenal. Because it rotated subordinate units through various ranges quite frequently, the 112th had live firing on its training schedule two or three times per week – with few exceptions. Writing to his old commander, Hooper explained, “We are bearing down on our shooting. My section has made from old boxes, wrapping paper, and butcher paper, all the targets possible. You would be surprised how well our men can do with their arms.”<sup>61</sup> Many rifle and machine gun ranges consisted of several lanes where soldiers shot at stationary targets from a distance of one thousand inches, but others were one or two hundred yards in length. By constructing plywood silhouettes and rigging them with telephone wire, Lieutenant Judson Chubbuck helped build ranges where the troopers could fire at moving or fleeting targets. Influenced by discussions

with Marines fresh from combat on Guadalcanal, Chubbuck also developed an anti-sniper course that required men to walk with vigilance through a wooded area and react to sudden movements and sounds. He later added live fire to the course by placing targets in trees, bushes, and dug-in positions. Throughout their first six months on New Caledonia, soldiers tossed hand grenades and honed their marksmanship skills, firing individual and crew-served weapons, including M-1 rifles, heavy and light machine guns, 81-mm mortars, and 37-mm antitank guns. The regiment conducted what appears to be its only live fire exercise in hours of darkness in February. In March, the men of each line troop spent about one day firing their M-1s. Later that month and into April, the machine gun platoons qualified with their weapons. In May, as it prepared to leave the island for possible combat duty, the regiment ran its soldiers through one more rifle range, a twenty-round familiarization course.

Field exercises and weapons training aside, the 112th spent a great deal of its time attempting to acquire several other skills during its nine months on New Caledonia. While instruction in demolitions, motorcycling, and the use of carrier pigeons appear as curious anomalies in the regimental diary's narrative of events, some topics stand out as areas that the unit truly desired its soldiers to learn. Hand-to-hand combat and bayonet training took on new meaning after Marine officers briefed the troopers on their experience in the Solomons. Map reading and land navigation received extra emphasis in the first months of 1943, when the regiment designed a compass course. For nine days at the end of March and into April, the men were taught to construct and to circumvent barbed wire obstacles. Chemical warfare got special attention after January when the troopers began to train weekly on protecting against gas attack. To assess its readiness, the regiment responded to simulated chemical strikes in February and again in April. In keeping with its tendency to sharpen the skills of its junior leaders, the 112th conducted officer and NCO schools periodically throughout its tour in New Caledonia.<sup>62</sup>

The regiment incorporated some night operations and infantry tactics into its schedule, but these areas received short shrift. Aside from the pre-dawn alerts, the men had little opportunity to maneuver and defend in hours of darkness. The regimental diary only points out four specific instances of night training. In contrast, Philip Hooper wrote, “The 112th did receive considerable night-fighting training” but that it “was somewhat academic.”<sup>63</sup> The schedule in January called for jungle movement, scouting and patrolling, and dismounted reconnaissance, but only in April was small unit infantry tactics explicitly mentioned in the diary. One enlisted man recalled the almost universal antipathy his peers had toward this training, stating that his first sergeant had no problems filling details when this subject was on the schedule. “The veteran troopers especially hated the dismounted training,” he explained. “There was a general disdain for activity associated with the infantry or ‘paddlefeet,’ as they were called.”<sup>64</sup>

That the men of the 112th spurned night training and infantry tactics is perplexing because many remembered well the briefings they received from the Marines returning from Guadalcanal. Lieutenant Colonel Clyde E. Grant, commander of 2d Squadron at the time, referred to them as “advisors” who “helped us a great deal.”<sup>65</sup> One trooper remembered the Marine officers as “good, tough teachers.”<sup>66</sup> During its stay on the French colony, the regiment sat through at least four Marine briefings on fighting in the jungle. On two other occasions, lecturers covered similar “lessons from Guadalcanal.” When the 1st Marine Raider Battalion came to New Caledonia after its operations in the Solomons, it bivouacked near the 112th, and this close contact facilitated discussions between the NCOs and enlisted men of both units. Although he found these first-hand accounts of battle generally valuable, Hooper declared that some of this exposure proved harmful. The Marines’ stories exaggerated the capabilities of the Japanese and passed on ideas that would later become bad practice when the unit entered



combat. Remembering how some of the men at first refused to throw hand grenades at night for fear of revealing their positions, Hooper explained that the Guadalcanal lessons taught the regiment “how to survive instead of how to kill Japs.”<sup>67</sup>

By all accounts, the troopers of the 112th attained a peak level of physical condition on New Caledonia. This aspect of training was a carry-over from the regiment’s Texas days and a favorite of Cunningham, who wrote in November, “I am convinced that the dismounted marching we did at Fort Clark prior to our departure put the men in such physical shape that the voyage over and our stay here up to now has shown very little sickness. We are still making marches on foot.”<sup>68</sup> From October to March, the regiment went on mounted marches every two weeks or so, and more frequently as the recently wild horses became conditioned. In that same period of time, the unit conducted eight-mile hikes on foot about once a month, usually while they led the mounts. After April, however, the frequency of dismounted marches increased to about once a week. The 112th’s receipt of jungle packs in May (as it was arranging to turn over its horses) and the resulting effect upon troopers having to march with the weight of their equipment on their shoulders instead of on their mounts took some getting used to. On 7 May, during its first trek with jungle packs, the 1st Squadron walked three miles and followed the march with a foot inspection. What appeared to be an initiation of sorts was repeated a few days later – just prior to their departure from the island – in the form of a two-hour hike, again with packs.<sup>69</sup>

Hooper described the training on New Caledonia as “constant.”<sup>70</sup> The numerous daily events mentioned in the regimental diary lend credence to his assessment. However, the overall effect of this ambitious and well-intended schedule must be considered in light of several recurring distractions. As at Fort Clark, horses and their care took up a considerable amount of the troopers’ time. The regiment received the first shipment of 201 mounts on 17 August 1942,

less than a week after their arrival on New Caledonia. It continued to draw horses periodically from the local remount squadron over the next two months, acquiring over twelve hundred by the end of October. This quantity was sufficient enough for a unit horse show that month, and the first mounted review took place in November. Purchased from Australia, several of the animals had not been “broken” and came to the regiment in poor shape. According to Cunningham, “Many of them arrived after their sea voyage . . . in such a condition as to make them unfit for duty for a considerable period of time.”<sup>71</sup> Molding wild horses into cavalry mounts was time-consuming, labor-intensive, and a sometimes painful process. Selected men worked with them every day for almost two weeks and progressed through the steps of leading them by rope, putting on saddles and bridles, mounting them, and finally riding them a modest distance. On 31 August, the 112th signed for 252 more and started the procedure again. Referring to the unfortunate consequences of the 112th’s “bronco-busting,” Cunningham stated, “there has been a heavy casualty list in the nearby hospital for some months.”<sup>72</sup> The medical officer reported that a considerable number of fractures resulted from falls during these unintended “rodeos.” The 112th continued to receive fresh horses from Australia until early April 1943 – approximately one month before its departure from New Caledonia.<sup>73</sup>

Even after breaking in the horses, the troopers – out of necessity – continued to devote a great deal of attention to their mounts. Horsemanship or “equitation training” took place about three times per week. The regimental diary makes explicit references to “stable duty” and “care of horses” one to four times each week, but these tasks probably occurred more frequently. Ernest Kelley, a sergeant from Troop A, said that about half the training day involved horses in some way. Troop B enlisted man Malcolm Moody, elaborated further: “On New Caledonia, the AM training schedule was generally half-hour [of] PT [physical training], mounted drill or road march followed by grooming & cleaning of saddles. Because of the poor condition of our

mounts we often led out [which is to say, each rider walked alongside his horse]. It was well understood that the care & conditioning of the horses was the Number 1 priority. The AM mounted training was well attended.”<sup>74</sup>

A garrison unit on an island with a major headquarters, the 112th was often called on for ceremonial duties and guard details. While ceremonies may have cultivated individual discipline and esprit de corps, the time spent on numerous mounted and dismounted reviews was probably not worth sacrificing for these nebulous benefits. Preparation of the men and their equipment for these events – the mounted ones especially – was extensive, requiring, in most cases, hours of practice.<sup>75</sup> Guard duty and other details assigned by First Island Command also impinged on time that could have been more usefully spent on dismounted tactical training. Although manning observation posts comprised a critical part of the regiment’s mission on New Caledonia, these tasks siphoned off large numbers of troopers from combat training. The regiment also suffered through the distraction of other details, particularly in support of the Navy’s loading and unloading operations. These diversions became especially acute in November as elements of the Americal Division departed for Guadalcanal. Twenty men reported to the nearby port on 3 November, and fifty more followed at the end of the month to serve there indefinitely. Cunningham indicated the overall effect of these interruptions on training when he wrote, “The regiment has been seriously handicapped by details and special duty requirements – varying in number from 100 to 300 men – which have been continuous since our arrival.”<sup>76</sup>

To be sure, the 112th’s training on New Caledonia could have been better. Although the schedule kept soldiers occupied, the practical effects of these activities should not be exaggerated. Clearly, island security, ceremonies, and work details took priority when field maneuvers and weapons firing would have better prepared the unit for combat. It is tempting,

knowing that the 112th fought dismounted for the entire war, to look scornfully upon the apparent obtuseness of the regiment and the hours it devoted to mounted exercises and horse care. One must tread softly when criticizing a cavalry unit for looking after its horses, however. In this task and many others, it had no choice. Nonetheless, the traditional outlook of the cavalymen probably had a negative effect on training that was more relevant to combat in the Southwest Pacific. One trooper described his peers' attitudes toward dismounted exercises as "perfunctory" because "there was a consensus that the 112th was on New Caledonia for the duration."<sup>77</sup> Depending on how widespread this feeling was, additional infantry training may have made little difference to the regiment, even if leaders had devoted more time to it.

Perceived weaknesses aside, the 112th's New Caledonia training had many real shortcomings, and several were similar to those noted from its Fort Clark experience. With the exception of a few defense exercises, combined arms training with armor and field artillery units and practice in the use of air support were non-existent. Contact with amphibious craft only came if these special boats were in the bay while the troopers were unloading ships for the Navy.<sup>78</sup>

Though stationed in the South Pacific for nine months, the regiment did not garner some of the benefits one would expect from such a deployment. For example, the 112th could not practice jungle operations in the temperate climate of New Caledonia, and relatively short tactical exercises offered soldiers little challenge in field craft or field sanitation. Moreover, the malaria-carrying anopheles mosquito did not inhabit the island, and, while the regiment was thankful for this circumstance, it would have to confront this threat during a future deployment.<sup>79</sup>

Outside the reach of War Department quotas, the 112th enjoyed a low level of personnel turnover, especially among its officers. Disruptions to the teams forming within small units were minimal. For example, enlisted men desiring commissions attended a special OCS on the island

and returned directly to the regiment. Of the thirty captains and field grade officers assigned to the 112th on 15 December 1943 – when it entered ground combat for the first time – twenty-eight had been with the regiment since its landing on New Caledonia in August 1942. The two exceptions were captains, a surgeon and a dentist. The same is true for twenty-two of the twenty-four first lieutenants on the unit's 15 December rolls. All fifteen second lieutenants joined the regiment as officers sometime after the 112th's arrival in the South Pacific, but at least eleven of those were enlisted men promoted from the ranks.<sup>80</sup>

Most importantly, the unit enjoyed stability at its most senior levels. Cunningham, Miller, and Hooper retained their positions as commander, executive officer, and operations officer, respectively. With slight alteration, they would keep these roles throughout the war.<sup>81</sup> Clyde Grant, a troop commander of the 112th in pre-war days, took charge of a squadron on New Caledonia and remained in that position throughout the war (switching squadrons once). Although Cunningham's demeanor caused some friction among these officers, they built upon their Fort Clark familiarity, gained a sense of each other's strengths, and learned how to work together. Moreover, faced with a real wartime mission in a tactical theater, the leadership of the 112th truly exercised their staffs. Headquarters elements managed soldiers and their equipment and discovered important lessons about liaison with adjacent units. At all levels then, the regiment matured on New Caledonia, where it took an important step in its journey into combat.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Jean R. Moenk, *A History of Large-Scale Army Maneuvers in the United States, 1935-1964* (Fort Monroe, VA: U.S. Continental Army Command, 1969), 26-27, 32-34; Kevin C. Holzimmer, "A Soldier's Soldier: A Military Biography of General Walter Krueger" (Ph.D. diss., Temple University, 1999), 170-74; Steven E. Clay, "The Texas Cavalry: A History of the 56th Cavalry Brigade" (M.A. thesis, Southwest Texas State University, 1989), 237.

<sup>2</sup> Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 238-39. Although it is tempting to attribute the 56th Cavalry Brigade's distinct selection for federal service to superior performance in the 1940 maneuvers, there is no evidence to suggest that the Texas troopers impressed the high command any more than other National Guardsmen. Most likely, the unit avoided deactivation and retained its mounted status because it was the only separate brigade in a field of cavalry divisions. The fact that the brigade was from a state that shared a long border with Mexico probably contributed to this decision as well. Texas, more so than Iowa for example, could justify the need for a mounted security force.

Nevertheless, see Harry Lynn Krenek, "A History of the Texas National Guard Between World War I and World War II" (Ph.D. diss., Texas Tech University, 1979), 349-55. Krenek argues that, during the interwar period, the Texas National Guard was called upon more frequently than units in other states (mainly for riot control, disaster relief, and law enforcement) and earned a reputation as one of the superior Guard organizations in the country.

<sup>3</sup> John B. Dunlap, "History of the Unit from Just Prior to Induction," n.d., Private Collection of John B. Dunlap, Jr., Leavenworth, KS [hereafter Dunlap Collection]; "650 National Guardsmen Begin Year of Training," *Dallas Journal*, 18 November 1940; Ernest L. Kelley, Jr., interview by author, Austin, TX, 21 September 2001, author's collection; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 243-44.

At the time of this writing, the Dunlap Collection is under the stewardship of Mr. Steven E. Clay of Leavenworth, KS. He intends to turn this collection over to the United States Cavalry Memorial Research Library in Fort Riley, KS.

<sup>4</sup> Dunlap, "History of the Unit," Dunlap Collection; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 243. For authorized peacetime and wartime personnel strengths, see Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 248.

<sup>5</sup> Dunlap, "History of the Unit," Dunlap Collection; "Guard Gets Leave Before Entraining," *Tyler (TX) Courier Times*, 24 November 1940; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 246-47, 249. Dunlap did not indicate when the regiment finally received its full complement of crew-served weapons. However, as late as April 1941, the 112th's sister regiment in the 56th Cavalry Brigade lacked several 81-mm mortars and .50 caliber machine guns, having only one of each weapon system in the entire unit (Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 259). When the 112th's Special Weapons Troop deployed to Fort Bliss in May 1941 in order to prepare for the Louisiana Maneuvers, it had its full complement of sixteen .50 caliber machine guns and six 81-mm mortars. This is not to suggest that the unit had resolved all of its equipment shortcomings. See Reeves R. Houghton, "The Recollections of Reeves R. Houghton as They Pertain to the 112th Cavalry Regiment, 18 November 1940-17 May 1944," n.d., 15, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Dunlap, "History of the Unit," Dunlap Collection.

<sup>7</sup> Dunlap, "History of the Unit," Dunlap Collection; Nat Campos, interview by author, Dallas, TX, 13 October 2001, author's collection; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 250-54. The first group of selectees, consisting of over 450 men, actually joined the regiment at Fort Bliss. See D. M. McMains, interview by John B. Dunlap, Jr., Hilltop Lakes, TX, 7 November 1992, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>8</sup> Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 262-64.

<sup>9</sup> Holzimmer, "A Soldier's Soldier," 183, quote on p. 203. Moenk, *Large-Scale Maneuvers*, 48, 61.

<sup>10</sup> Houghton, "Recollections," 23-24, Dunlap Collection; Christopher R. Gabel, *The U.S. Army GHQ Maneuvers of 1941* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1991), 171, 189; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 268, 282-85. The War Department used the experience of the 1941 maneuvers to justify the complete mechanization of the combination horse-mechanized cavalry units remaining in the Army. See "56th Brigade Only National Guard Horse Cavalry Unit Left in Service," *Fort Clark (TX) Centaur* [hereafter *Centaur*], 18 April 1942, Dunlap Collection. A collection of the *Centaur* may also be found in records of the Texas Military Forces Museum, Austin, TX.

<sup>11</sup> Moenk, *Large-Scale Maneuvers*, 51; Holzimmer, "A Soldier's Soldier," 194; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 271-73.

<sup>12</sup> Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers*, 172-74.

<sup>13</sup> John B. Dunlap, "Recollections of the 1941 Louisiana Maneuvers," n.d., Dunlap Collection; Houghton, "Recollections," 23-25, *ibid.* For the authorized strength of a rifle troop, see U.S. War Department, *Table of Organization, No. 2-17, Cavalry Troop, Rifle, Horse* (Washington, D.C., 1940), *ibid.*

<sup>14</sup> Dunlap, "1941 Louisiana Maneuvers," Dunlap Collection; "New Release Plan Starts Next Month," *124th Cavalry News*, 13 September 1941, *ibid.*; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 286-87.

<sup>15</sup> Philip L. Hooper, interview by John B. Dunlap, Jr., Dickson, TN, 18 September 1992, Dunlap Collection; Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 48-50; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 286.

Regarding the integration of non-Texan recruits, Illinois draftee Lionel Carter recalled, "It was like fighting the Civil War all over again!" Carter attributed the supposed difference in quality to the selectees' "very rigorous basic training" and the "weeding out" process that this experience entailed. According to Carter, the original Guardsmen did not undergo a similar test until the unit's first combat action. See Lionel Carter, "Combat Veterans Survey," conducted by Kenneth R. Mladenka, Department of Political Science, Texas A&M University, 1990, Dunlap Collection. Also see John Ellis, *The Sharp End of War: The Fighting Man in World War II* (London: David and Charles, 1980), 331-32, where the author comments on the rivalry between Regulars and selectees in the British and American armies.

<sup>16</sup> Kelley interview, Dunlap Collection; Thomas W. Nance, interview by author, Dallas, TX, 13 October 2001, author's collection. Non-Texan recruit Lionel Carter attested to the abatement of regional rivalry: "[I]n the nine months we ["Yankee" selectees and Texas Guardsmen] spent at Fort Clark a very close comradeship was developed that was so strong that later replacements never really became as close buddies as we did." Carter, "Combat Veterans Survey," Dunlap Collection. For a discussion on the problem of integrating replacements, see Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 336-39; and Samuel A. Stouffer et al., *Studies in Social Psychology in World War II*, vol. 2, *The American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1949), 242-72.

<sup>17</sup> Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 288.

<sup>18</sup> After graduating from George Washington University, he secured a Regular Army commission in the cavalry in March 1917 at the age of twenty-four. During the interwar period, Cunningham held positions in various line units in Texas and Virginia and had one tour of duty with the Philippine Scouts on Luzon. His military schooling included the usual courses at the Cavalry School in Fort Riley, Kansas, as well as attendance at the Command and General Staff College at Fort Leavenworth. For one year, he taught military science and tactics at the University of Georgia. On two occasions, Cunningham served as

an instructor with National Guard units, first in Massachusetts and then in Connecticut. When this hardened Regular assumed command of the federalized Texas troopers of the 112th, he probably did so indignantly. Captain Philip L. Hooper, regimental operations officer at the time, believed that Cunningham held the unit in low esteem. If, as Hooper suggests, the colonel approached his new assignment “with the suspicion that none of [his subordinates] knew anything,” he at least based this view on previous personal experience with the National Guard. “Julian Wallace Cunningham (1893-1972),” biographical sketch, n.d., Dunlap Collection; Hooper interview, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> A colorful example of one of Cunningham’s outbursts occurred in New Guinea when a pigeon carrying critical instructions flew lazily to a nearby tree and perched on a branch shortly after its release, an enraged Cunningham insisted that Hooper order the bird to complete its mission. Headquarters (HQ), 112th Cavalry, “Regimental Diary, 1 July 1942-5 January 1946,” CAVR-112-0.3.0, Box 18088, Entry 427 [hereafter “Regimental Diary”], RG 407, National Archives and Records Administration, College Park, MD [hereafter NA]; Clyde E. Grant, interview by John B. Dunlap, Jr., Abilene, TX, 16 November 1992, Dunlap Collection; McMains interview, *ibid.*; Alexander M. Miller, III, interview by John B. Dunlap, Jr., Washington, D.C., October 1992, *ibid.*; Kelley interview, author’s collection; Philip L. Hooper, tape recording, Dickson, TN, 1 October 2001, Dunlap Collection.

It is interesting to note that Norman Mailer, author of *The Naked and the Dead* (New York: Rinehart and Company, 1948), served as an enlisted man with the 112th Cavalry in the Philippines. Cunningham and the division commander in Mailer’s book have too many differences between them to suggest that the former *is* the latter. However, given the name of Mailer’s antagonist (General Cummings) and his “tyrannical” character, it is tantalizing – if not particularly useful – to consider the extent of the connection. For short accounts of Mailer’s service with the 112th on Luzon and during the occupation of Japan, see Hilary Mills, *Mailer: A Biography* (New York: Empire Books, 1982), 77-81; and Peter Manso, *Mailer: His Life and Times* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1985), 82-86, 93-94.

<sup>20</sup> Judson Chubbuck, interview by John B. Dunlap, Jr., Joliet, IL, 12 October 1993; Grant interview; Hooper tape recording, October 2001; McMains interview; Miller interview; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>21</sup> Hooper tape recording, October 2001, Dunlap Collection. On New Caledonia, Cunningham fired one troop commander (Julian W. Cunningham to Harry H. Johnson, 2 November 1942, *ibid.*). During the period following combat on New Britain, he allowed a troublesome captain to rotate back to the United States (Philip L. Hooper, telephone conversation with author, 28 December 2001, author’s collection). At the battle on the Driniumor River, a relatively weak squadron commander was wounded, replaced, and, upon his recovery, ended up serving elsewhere (Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection). This is not to say that Cunningham never resorted to *threatening* an officer’s relief (or court-martial) when the mood suited him. For example, see Arthur, *Bushmasters*, 61-68.

<sup>22</sup> Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>23</sup> Chubbuck interview; McMains interview; Miller interview; Hooper interview; all in Dunlap Collection. For accounts that describe the tactical and strategic confusion of the Driniumor River campaign and its effect on American combat units, see Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*; and Taaffe, *MacArthur’s Jungle War*, 188-209.

<sup>24</sup> Julian W. Cunningham to Judson Chubbuck, 10 June 1948, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>25</sup> Cunningham to Johnson, 2 November 1942, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>26</sup> Cunningham biographical sketch, Dunlap Collection.



<sup>27</sup> John B. Dunlap, "Recollections, 21 December 1941 to 1 January 1942," n.d., Dunlap Collection; Houghton, "Recollections," 48, *ibid.*; William J. McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," n.d., 4-5, *ibid.*; Hooper interview, *ibid.*; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 293, 304-8.

<sup>28</sup> Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection. Dunlap, "History of the Unit," *ibid.*; "Biographical Sketch, Colonel Philip L. Hooper," 1966, *ibid.*; Hooper tape recording, October 2001, *ibid.*; Tommy Nance and Max Giles, interview by author, Dallas, TX, 13 October 2001, author's collection. H. Lamar Boland, a platoon leader and later troop commander in the 112th, referred to Hooper as "one of the best guys . . . in the regiment . . . because he . . . took care of all the details. He really did know how to do every little thing." Harmon Lamar Boland, interview by James Harvey Young, 18 April 1985, Decatur, Georgia, 27, Harmon Lamar Boland Papers, United States Army Military History Institute, Carlisle, PA [hereafter USAMHI].

<sup>29</sup> Miller interview, Dunlap Collection. Miller also described Hooper as "a very capable officer," one of the few people who "knew how to handle . . . Cunningham."

<sup>30</sup> Cunningham to Johnson, 2 November 1942, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>31</sup> Robert Ross Smith, "Comments and Off-the-record Remarks to Cunningham-Hooper Interview," 8 April 1947, Smith's Interviews for *Approach to the Philippines*, USAMHI.

<sup>32</sup> Gabel, *GHQ Maneuvers*, 173-75.

<sup>33</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, General Order No. 1, "Training Program, 12 January 1942-9 May 1942," CAVR-112-1.13, Box 18091, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>34</sup> "Squad Problems Begin Next Week," *Centaur*, 2 February 1942; "Troop G Wins Platoon Tests," *ibid.*, 14 March 1942; "Troops to Invade 'Enemy' Territory," *ibid.*, 21 March 1942; "Squadron Tests Set Next Week," *ibid.*, 18 April 1942; "Squadron Tests Are Completed," *ibid.*, 9 May 1942; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>35</sup> "Third Army Test Team Completes 112th Inspection," *Centaur*, 28 February 1942, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>36</sup> Philip L. Hooper to Edward J. Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection; Kelley interview, author's collection.

<sup>37</sup> "Regiment Ready to Blast Away on Target Range," *Centaur*, 29 November 1941; "Troopers Shoot High Qualifying Range Average," *ibid.*, 20 December 1941; both in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>38</sup> "Second Phase of LMG Tests Begin," *Centaur*, 21 February 1942; "Firing to Begin on Rifle Range," *ibid.*, 7 March 1942; "Combat Firing Preps for Test," *ibid.*, 14 March 1942; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, officers and troopers alike identified weapons training as a particular strength of the regiment. To account for this fairly common belief, it is helpful to remember that many essential skills having to do with individual and crew-served weapons can be acquired and developed without live firing. For example, light machine gunner Ernest Kelley remembered that his weapon jammed multiple times in his first firefight. Talking with buddies afterward, he was surprised to learn that fellow troopers had noticed no abatement in the rapid firing of his light machine gun during the skirmish. Kelley attributed his comrades' observation to his own ability to quickly react and correct a stoppage – a skill obtained not by

frequent shooting but through constant practice and weapons handling. Kelley interview, author's collection.

<sup>40</sup> "Regiment Ready to Blast Away on Target Range," *Centaur*, 29 November 1941; "Training Exams Ahead for NCOs," *ibid.*, 28 February 1942; "NCOs to Study War Chemicals," *ibid.*, 6 April 1942; "Gas Defense Course Slated," *ibid.*, 11 April 1942; Hooper recording; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>41</sup> Brown, *Draftee Division*, 35-36.

<sup>42</sup> Quoted in *ibid.*, 35.

<sup>43</sup> "Officers, NCOs See Two Films," *Centaur*, 21 February 1942; "Military Training to Be Film Subject," *ibid.*, 18 April 1942; "Training Films Set Next Week," *ibid.*, 25 April 1942; "Films Stress Gas Warfare," *ibid.*, 16 May 1942; Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>44</sup> "Troops Order Maps," *Centaur*, 17 January 1942; "News Digest Goes Daily to Troops," *ibid.*, 25 April 1942; "Orientation Lectures Tell of War's Causes, Developments," *ibid.*, 2 February 1942; "Latin Americans Need U.S. Help," *ibid.*, 21 March 1942; "San Marcos Man Is Orientation Speaker," *ibid.*, 28 March 1942; "African Warfare Lecture Subject," *ibid.*, 9 May 1942; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>45</sup> "Officers, Men to Attend 56th Brigade Intelligence School," *Centaur*, 14 March 1942; "Drivers' School Instructs 37," *ibid.*, 6 April 1942; "Men Leave for Motor Schools," *ibid.*, 25 April 1942; "Demolition is School Subject," *ibid.*, 25 April 1942; "Men to Attend Radio School," *ibid.*, 6 April 1942; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>46</sup> Nance and Giles interview, author's collection.

<sup>47</sup> Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> "Horse Show Set Next Saturday at Post Ring," *Centaur*, 2 February 1942; "Third Informal Horse Show Set for April 11th," *ibid.*, 28 March 1942; both in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>50</sup> Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection. As Judson Chubbuck explained, "Horses were good training. You learned to take care of your equipment, you learned to monitor your time, you learned to be dependable. You know, you got to take care of that horse or the horse was going to die." Chubbuck interview, *ibid.*

<sup>51</sup> "Discharged Men Back in Service," *Centaur*, 3 January 1942, Dunlap Collection. I draw the estimate of personnel turnover from articles in the *Centaur* from November 1941 to May 1942. I also considered the transfer of thirty-six privates to HQ, 56th Cavalry Brigade in March 1942 ("Men Transferred to 56th Brigade," *Centaur*, 14 March 1942, *ibid.*).

<sup>52</sup> McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 5, Dunlap Collection; Clay, "Texas Cavalry," 311.

<sup>53</sup> Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>54</sup> "Regimental Diary," 8-21 July 1942, RG 407, NA; Alexander M. Miller, III, "Journal of Colonel A. M. Miller," [hereafter Miller Journal] 12-20 July 1942, Dunlap Collection; McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 5, *ibid.*; Miller interview, *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 22 July-11 August 1942, RG 407, NA; Julian W. Cunningham, “Notes from a Cavalry Regiment Overseas,” *Cavalry Journal* 52 (May-June 1943): 56; Miller Journal, 21 July-11 August 1942, Dunlap Collection; Alexander M. Miller, III to John B. Dunlap, Jr., 26 March 1993, *ibid.*; Malcolm N. Moody, letter to author, 27 December 2001, author’s collection; Chubbuck interview, Dunlap Collection; Nance and Giles interview, author’s collection.

<sup>56</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 11 August-30 September 1942, RG 407, NA; Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, “History of Medical Activities (2d Quarter),” 6 October 1943, Quarterly Medical Report, CAVR-112-MD-0.2, Box 18094, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Cunningham, “Cavalry Regiment Overseas,” 56; Miller Journal, 2-19 September, 1, 11, 13, 31 October, and 2, 28 November 1942, Dunlap Collection; John B. Dunlap, Jr., letter to author, 10 January 2002, author’s collection; Moody, letter to author, 27 December 2001, *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> According to Hooper, Patch was responsible for causing a horse cavalry regiment to be deployed to the unlikely locale of the South Pacific. In requesting additional forces to protect New Caledonia from a potential Japanese invasion (a contingency not out of the question in early 1942), he discovered that all trained outfits were already slated for deployment elsewhere, except for two mounted regiments on the Texas border. Apparently, a staff officer at the War Department hinted that one of these units would be assigned to Patch’s command if the general could justify the need for cavalry on the island. Desperate to bolster New Caledonia’s defenses in order to free the nascent Americal Division for training, Patch declared that he needed the cavalymen to conduct mounted patrols along the coast. His request was approved, provided Australia could furnish the horses. The general then set in motion the events that brought to SOPAC the troopers of the 112th and eventually enough mounts to for them to ride. Philip L. Hooper to David O. Hale, 3 April 1970, Colonel Philip L. Hooper Personal Papers, Texas Military Forces Museum, Austin, TX.

<sup>58</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 26-27 August 1942, 17 September 1942, RG 407, NA; Cunningham, “Cavalry Regiment Overseas,” 56-57; Malcolm N. Moody, “Training of the 112th, Feb-Dec 1943,” n.d., *ibid.*; Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 406-7.

<sup>59</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 26 August 1942-9 April 1943, RG 407, NA; Nance and Giles interview, author’s collection.

<sup>60</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 25 August 1942-19 February 1943, RG 407, NA; Grant interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>61</sup> Philip L. Hooper to Harry H. Johnson, 8 November 1942, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>62</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 29 August 1942-10 May 1943, RG 407, NA; McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 8, Dunlap Collection. McDonnell notes that Marines served as the instructors for bayonet training.

<sup>63</sup> Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>64</sup> Moody, “Training of the 112th,” Dunlap Collection.

<sup>65</sup> Grant interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>66</sup> McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 8, Dunlap Collection. Also see, Chubbuck interview, *ibid.*; Kelley interview, author’s collection; and Miller interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>67</sup> Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection. “Regimental Diary,” 29 August 1942- 26 April 1943, RG 407, NA; Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>68</sup> Cunningham to Johnson, 2 November 1942, Dunlap Collection. Clyde Grant recalled that “our men were in good shape, they were in perfect physical condition” (Grant interview, *ibid.*). See also, Kelley interview, author’s collection; and Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>69</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 5 October 1942-10 May 1943, RG 407, NA.

<sup>70</sup> Hooper tape recording, October 2001, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>71</sup> Cunningham, “Cavalry Regiment Overseas,” 56. “Regimental Diary,” 17 August-10 October 1942, 7 November 1942, RG 407, NA; Troop B, 251st Quartermaster Remount Squadron, “Movement of Public Animals to and from this Base [New Caledonia], 17 September 1944, Dunlap Collection; Miller Journal, 17, 31 August, 14, 23 September, 20 October, and 7 November 1942, *ibid.*

<sup>72</sup> Cunningham, “Cavalry Regiment Overseas,” 56. Miller Journal, 17-31 August 1942, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>73</sup> Even the regimental executive officer was hospitalized for twelve days after being thrown from his horse. Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, “History of Medical Activities (2d Quarter),” 6 October 1943, RG 407, NA; Troop B, 251st Quartermaster Remount Squadron, “Movement of Public Animals,” 17 September 1944, Dunlap Collection; Miller Journal, 28 September, 1-14 October 1942, *ibid.* For use of the terms “rodeo” and “bronco-busting” to describe breaking in horses, see McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 8, Dunlap Collection; and Kelley interview, author’s collection.

<sup>74</sup> Moody, “Training of 112th,” Dunlap Collection. “Regimental Diary,” 17 August 1942-11 May 1943, RG 407, NA; Kelley interview, author’s collection.

<sup>75</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 30 August 1942-24 April 1943, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 30 August, 7, 11 September, 7, 11 November 1942, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>76</sup> Cunningham, “Cavalry Regiment Overseas,” 57. “Regimental Diary,” 24 September 1942-24 March 1943, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 3 November 1942, Dunlap Collection; Grant interview, *ibid.*

<sup>77</sup> Moody, “Training of the 112th,” Dunlap Collection.

<sup>78</sup> Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>79</sup> Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, “History of Medical Activities (2d Quarter),” 6 October 1943, RG 407, NA.

<sup>80</sup> Cunningham to Johnson, 2 November 1942; HQ, 112th Cavalry, “Monthly Personnel Roster,” 31 August 1943; HQ, 112th Cavalry, “Officer Roster as of December 15, 1943”; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>81</sup> When Cunningham became a brigadier general, he took charge of the task forces formed around the 112th and, later, the 112th Regimental Combat Team. Miller was promoted to colonel and assumed command of the 112th Cavalry Regiment but still worked under Cunningham. Hooper stayed at Cunningham’s side throughout the war, serving essentially as his chief of staff (though his title varied).

### CHAPTER III

#### CLOSER TO THE CAULDRON: WOODLARK AND ARAWE

Hard earned victories in eastern New Guinea and Guadalcanal in the first months of 1943 checked Japan's southward advance and set the conditions for an Allied counterstrike. After much debate over command relationships and resource allocation, the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) and theater commanders in the Pacific settled on a plan that focused on the isolation of Rabaul. By 1943, the Japanese had fortified this natural harbor on the northeastern tip of New Britain into a base that accommodated a substantial complement of warships, planes, and soldiers. With its military strength, Rabaul served as both a staging area for future Japanese offensives and a strategic outpost along the empire's defensive perimeter. The campaign against this objective involved two separate commands – SWPA under General MacArthur and Admiral William F. Halsey's South Pacific Area (SOPAC). Dubbed CARTWHEEL, the plan called for MacArthur's advance northwest up the coast of New Guinea as Halsey island-hopped on an almost parallel axis up the Solomons chain. Scheduled to begin in the summer of 1943, the campaign was expected to culminate at the end of the year with SWPA establishing a lodgment on the western tip of New Britain.

The need to extend the reach of Allied air cover determined the first steps of CARTWHEEL. Landings on Woodlark and Kiriwina and the subsequent construction of airdromes at these locations would bring Rabaul and the northern Solomons within range of U.S. fighters and medium bombers. Roughly two hundred miles off the eastern tip of New Guinea, these small islands would also serve as way stations for planes as they shifted from one area to another, flying missions in support of either MacArthur or Halsey. In the preliminary stages of planning for CARTWHEEL, the SOPAC commander suggested that the Allies occupy the two

islands and volunteered to provide the ground forces to do the job. When the details were finalized in April 1943, Halsey followed through on his offer and transferred the 112th Cavalry out of SOPAC and into SWPA, where it fell under the control of Lieutenant General Walter Krueger's Sixth Army and drew the Woodlark mission.<sup>1</sup>

As a result of this change of assignment, the 112th turned over its horses to First Island Command and left New Caledonia in May 1943. These developments came as a shock to the troopers, many of whom believed they would never fight the Japanese. They expected the unit to remain mounted and, as such, unsuited for jungle warfare. Senior leaders, however, were not as surprised. Months earlier, Cunningham, had written, "There is a constant threat of a move at any time."<sup>2</sup> Grant, in charge of 2d Squadron, recalled, "We couldn't see sitting there all during the war with this regiment of horses parading for dignitaries."<sup>3</sup> Coming a mere three weeks after the 112th had been issued its last contingent of horses, the marching orders precipitated a flurry of activity. In their final days on New Caledonia, the cavalrymen received additional clothing, canvas jungle boots, machetes, and mosquito nets. Now dismounted, the unit faced the challenge of determining how to carry the mortars, machine guns, and radios that had long ridden on the backs of its horses. After two weeks of breaking camp and loading its vehicles and equipment onto transports, the 112th sailed on 13 May 1943.<sup>4</sup>

Landing at Townsville, Australia, four days later, the regiment began to train intensely for the Woodlark operation. Although Sixth Army believed there were no enemy soldiers on the island, the leaders of the 112th could not be certain.<sup>5</sup> Facing the grim possibility of combat, they prepared in earnest. Without horses to confuse the issue of how the outfit would fight, training – if not conducted in great depth – was for the most part relevant. The cavalrymen spent several days on infantry tactics at platoon and squad level, specifically scouting and patrolling. These small unit drills helped to assimilate the eighty-five replacements assigned to the unit as it

departed New Caledonia. As the 112th expected to seize Woodlark and later secure the airdrome that would be constructed there, regimental and squadron exercises concentrated on defending prepared positions along the coast. Troopers dug weapons emplacements, laid barbed wire obstacles, and practiced occupying their assigned sectors at night. On one occasion, the 112th incorporated its newly attached artillery battalion into a field problem and used the opportunity to sort through communications procedures with the supporting unit. Leaders also devoted several hours to hand-to-hand combat and bayonet training, and previously marginalized topics – like malaria control, the *Articles of War*, and first aid procedures – received more emphasis. Finally, the unit continued its rigorous program of conditioning marches, conducting no less than twelve five to ten-mile hikes over a twenty-day period.<sup>6</sup>

The regiment conducted weapons training at Townsville but probably not to the degree it would have preferred. Within a week of arriving, troopers built a one hundred-yard range, which leaders hoped to use during the 112th's short stay in Australia. As it turned out, each of the unit's ninety machine gun crews went through about one day of live firing. Only soldiers from A, B, and Service Troops were able to familiarize with their M-1s and M-1903s, and they fired no more than twenty-five rounds. Finally, soldiers of the 112th's already established 81-mm mortar sections trained former stable workers and horseshoers in their new duties as crewmen who would operate the recently issued 60-mm mortar. This included two days of live firing.<sup>7</sup>

Besides weapons training, infantry tactics, and jungle survival skills, the 112th attempted to learn the intricacies of amphibious warfare. This daunting task was made more difficult by the scarcity of shipping in MacArthur's theater, as well as a lack of experience at all echelons. Nevertheless, by the time Cunningham and his men reached Australia, SWPA had developed a cursory training program that at least introduced units to the tools and techniques of amphibious operations. At Townsville, the regiment became conversant in the nautical jargon required for

planning the movement to Woodlark and gained exposure to the landing craft that would take them there. For two days, men practiced boarding and debarking from special amphibious transports in daylight and nighttime conditions. Equally important was the rapid loading and unloading of equipment, skills that demanded not only close liaison with naval personnel but also a detailed understanding of ship capacity. To this end, the 112th outlined the cargo areas of landing craft upon the beaches of Townsville (and later Milne Bay) and assembled its vehicles, attached howitzers, and other pieces of heavy equipment into these “slots” in order to ensure that the cargo designated for each type of ship fit within its allotted space.<sup>8</sup>

After taking advantage of a fleeting opportunity to concentrate on training, the 112th – with the exception of about five hundred men – departed Townsville on 13 June 1943 and sailed for Milne Bay, a bustling military port on the eastern tip of New Guinea. While leaders made final preparations for the impending voyage to Woodlark, soldiers worked on labor details at docks and supply dumps. When they could, small units practiced patrolling, but the time spent at Milne Bay mainly involved individual rest, periodic inspections, care of arms and equipment, and improving the bivouac site.<sup>9</sup>

CHRONICLE, the codename for the seizure of Woodlark and Kiriwina, was the first of many operations involving Krueger’s Sixth Army and Rear Admiral Daniel E. Barbey’s Seventh Amphibious Force. Expecting little Japanese interference, SWPA looked forward to what would essentially be a test run of nascent techniques and procedures. Barbey described CHRONICLE as “a tryout of the organization and of the capabilities of beaching ships and crews under unusually difficult navigational conditions. If no enemy was encountered, it would in effect be an advanced training exercise, and we hoped it would turn out that way.”<sup>10</sup>

This amphibious operation was also distinctive because Sixth Army planned to send shore parties to the objectives ahead of the assault force. In May 1943, Krueger dispatched



engineer reconnaissance teams to the islands. They confirmed the enemy's absence and reported on beach conditions, offshore obstacles, inland trails, potential airstrip sites, and defensive positions. Given this information and anxious to minimize the possibility of failure in this critical first step toward the isolation of Rabaul, leaders at theater level decided to send advanced parties ahead of the main echelons. In the early morning darkness of 21 June, 260 men under the 112th's Major D. M. McMains departed Townsville on two high-speed destroyer-transports (called APDs) and proceeded to Woodlark via Milne Bay. The detachment consisted of Troop G, members of an attached naval base unit, and representatives from various special elements of the Woodlark task force. Reaching the waters off the Guasopa Peninsula just after midnight on 23 June, the Americans boarded six landing craft, which plowed through high-speed winds and choppy waves toward the beach.

To test Sixth Army's amphibious assault techniques under realistic conditions and to guard against complacency, Krueger allowed his forces to think that they might come across enemy soldiers on Woodlark – despite intelligence suggesting otherwise. In this regard, the general's plan almost backfired. Scrambling out of the surf at 0400 and ready for a possible clash with the Japanese, the advanced party just barely avoided a disastrous encounter in the pre-dawn light with an unsuspecting coastwatcher and a group of armed natives. After linking up with this officer from the Royal Australian Navy, McMains and his men prepared landing sites for the main body.<sup>11</sup>

A week later, the first echelon of the Woodlark task force arrived and began unloading the night of 30 June 1943. Borrowing additional trucks from other units in the area, the contingent out of Townsville was able to stow every piece of equipment in a vehicle. With this mobile configuration, loading and unloading consisted simply of driving trucks onto transports in Australia and driving them off at their destination. Moving down an exit ramp and onto the

beach, the vehicles cleared the landing site quickly and headed to their marshaling areas further inland. The debarkation of other waves was not as smooth, but leaders dealt with the natural and man-made obstacles of coral reefs and confusion, managing to clear the entire first echelon from the beach by early morning. The next group of men, vehicles, and equipment arrived that evening (at the wrong location, incidentally), and elements of the task force continued to flow onto the island over the next month – seven echelons in all. Typically hard to please, the Sixth Army commander was critical in his after-action report but cited the 112th's mobile loading and its use of deck-plan diagrams in training as key contributors to success.<sup>12</sup>

Composed of the 112th and several attached units, the Woodlark contingent, known as Leatherback Task Force, totaled almost seven thousand personnel. The wide array of specialized outfits in the task force sheds light on how SWPA tackled the monumental task of establishing a relatively self-sufficient military base on an island with little more than coral, mangrove swamps, and banyan trees. Besides the security element of 1,633 dismounted cavalymen, Cunningham's command contained the 134th Field Artillery Battalion (105-mm), an engineer company, an evacuation hospital, and several logistical units – including a bakery platoon, which provided fresh bread daily. Substantially adding to the task force's firepower was the 12th Marine Defense Battalion, consisting of multiple antiaircraft batteries and 155-mm coast artillery guns. More significantly, Leatherback contained a naval base unit of nearly twenty-four hundred men. This organization included communications elements, an ARGUS radar system, and a construction battalion. A malaria control unit, weather detachment, and air support party also fell under Cunningham's supervisory control.<sup>13</sup>

The creation of Leatherback Task Force complicated command relationships within the 112th and brought about an underlying tension among senior leaders that would persist for most of the war. Placed in charge of a diverse assortment of units and assigned the task of seizing an

island and building an airdrome, Cunningham necessarily had to expand his focus. He formed a separate headquarters and did so by stripping the regimental staff of several officers – Major Philip Hooper among them. Thus, on Woodlark, the task force and the regiment were two links in the chain of command, with Cunningham directing the former and the 112th's executive officer – Lieutenant Colonel Alexander Miller – at the head of the latter. As the operation concluded, each man was promoted, and Miller became commander of the regiment.

Cunningham, now a brigadier general, took charge of another task force, again with the 112th at its core. This arrangement remained essentially the same in future campaigns, becoming official in October 1944 when the 112th Regimental Combat Team (RCT) was formed under Cunningham's command.<sup>14</sup>

Regardless of its changing label (task force or RCT), the organization had but one subordinate maneuver element permanently assigned to it. This was Miller's 112th Cavalry Regiment. Naturally, Cunningham and his staff of fifteen to twenty officers continued to identify closely with the outfit from which many of them had come. Indeed, with the exception of a direct support artillery battalion, the 112th was often the only unit Cunningham's headquarters controlled. The general seemed to consider the regiment proper as a redundant layer in the command structure and its two squadrons as subordinate elements belonging directly to him. This undesirable set-up was a constant source of strain in the 112th, and Cunningham's overbearing manner exacerbated the situation.<sup>15</sup> Colonel Miller bore the brunt of frustration caused by this arrangement.

The only Regular Army officer besides Cunningham to serve in the 112th, Miller joined the regiment two days after the attack on Pearl Harbor. A thirty-six year-old bachelor coming from an assignment with the 1st Cavalry Division, he reported to Fort Clark with his widowed mother. Miller was a fourth-generation West Pointer and had taught English at the Military

Academy for four years. Philip Hooper remembered him as “a quiet, do-it-by-the-book type man” who, in the first months of their acquaintance, politely (and in all seriousness) admonished the young S-3 for splitting an infinitive in a written tactical order.<sup>16</sup> Considered a gentleman by peers and subordinates alike, Miller had a placating personality that contrasted sharply with Cunningham’s caustic demeanor. Though regarded for taking care of his men, he tended to earn sympathy rather than respect from his subordinate leaders, who considered him neither tough nor aggressive.<sup>17</sup>

Like Hooper, Miller thought of himself as a buffer between the cantankerous Cunningham and other officers. However, he did not share Hooper’s close association with the general.<sup>18</sup> Instead, Miller was often little more than Cunningham’s relay station to the squadrons or was bypassed altogether. Marginalized as a leader in each case, Miller faced a situation that not everyone would have been willing to accept. The squadron commanders felt sorry for him.<sup>19</sup> Strained as it was, the relationship among the 112th’s senior leadership held together. Certainly, Hooper helped with his enviable ability to “smooth ruffled feathers,” but Miller’s mild-mannered style contributed as well, for it enabled him to tolerate Cunningham’s heavy-handedness and may have taken some of the sting out of the general’s directives as they filtered down to the squadrons.<sup>20</sup> In any case, the command arrangement that evolved from the formation of Leatherback Task Force would remain in place throughout the war.

Securing a small lodgment on the eastern part of the forty-four-mile-long island, Leatherback elements began clearing the jungle and blasting channels through the offshore reefs. Construction on the airstrip started on 2 July 1943, and, within two weeks, the runway was ready for transport planes.<sup>21</sup> Its primary mission fulfilled, the task force worked thereafter to improve the base. These efforts encompassed not just the airfield but also a rudimentary road network, port facilities, and inland and coastal defenses.

In spite of the enervating tropical climate and torrential rain, the men of the 112th carved a relatively comfortable niche out of the flat jungle-covered terrain of Woodlark. Away from the defensive line, men lived in tents. In short order, kitchens and mess halls were enclosed and constructed on concrete floors. After four days of eating unsavory jungle rations, the regiment began to enjoy better meals, especially when fresh food became a staple of the soldier's diet. Within four weeks, a post exchange was in operation, and, after a couple of months, troopers' leisure time consisted of organized athletics by day and watching outdoor movies at night.<sup>22</sup>

Baseball and badminton notwithstanding, the 112th stayed busy during the initial months at Woodlark and learned how tedious base construction and maintenance could be. Many areas demanded attention and required the regiment to form labor details sometimes comprised of hundreds of men. Armed with machetes and other tools, cavalrymen slashed away surrounding underbrush, cut new jeep trails, and helped to clear the airfield. They also unloaded cargo from incoming transports and moved supplies to and from the quartermaster dump.

Aside from the command and control duties performed by Cunningham and his staff, the 112th's purpose on Woodlark was to protect the airdrome in the event of invasion. It became evident to everyone soon after landing that Japanese forces were not on the island, but leaders in the regiment continued to warn of the possible presence of enemy stragglers and reminded their soldiers that an attack by sea or air could come at any time. To defend against this contingency, the cavalrymen built and manned an extensive system of prepared positions and OPs.

The heart of the 112th's defense consisted of a well-fortified main line of resistance (MLR). With its flanks anchored on opposite coasts of the Guasopa Peninsula, the MLR arced inland to enclose the airstrip, its supporting facilities, and living areas behind a barrier of barbed wire, heavy weapons, and fighting positions. After dividing the MLR into two squadron sectors, the regiment dispatched small armies of machete-wielding troopers forward to hack away the

jungle and clear fields of fire. From July to November 1943, the facetiously named “Cunningham Line” grew more elaborate as soldiers built dummy positions, laid miles of overlapping barbed wire to the front, and strung perhaps an equal amount of communications wire between unit command posts (CPs) in the rear. Dug deep into the coral and reinforced by heavy logs and sandbags, formidable machine gun bunkers dotted the MLR. With their interlocking fire lanes, these positions formed the bulwark of the perimeter. At the end of September, men also began to carve individual foxholes along the MLR.

The regiment integrated its weapon systems into the defense of the airdrome by centralizing some assets and detaching others to subordinate units. Troop F and a 37-mm antitank gun constituted the task force reserve. Miller formed a reserve for the 112th by organizing the Train Defense Platoon as a mobile machine gun unit and attaching its vehicles and men to Troop C. Mortars remained under regimental control, with the 60-mm sections grouped into two three-tube batteries. The 81-mm mortars were organized in a similar manner. The 112th also consolidated several machine guns and employed them around the airstrip. However, one heavy machine gun platoon was attached to each squadron for use on the MLR, as were most of the regiment’s 37-mm antitank guns.<sup>23</sup>

While its men worked on the MLR, the 112th simultaneously emplaced an outer ring of OPs some distance beyond the main line’s field of fire. Called the outpost line of resistance (OPLR), it was manned every night and served as early warning in the event of an attack. Efforts to improve this line persisted until the unit received orders to leave Woodlark. In October, troopers constructed machine gun positions there, and, as late as mid-November, soldiers were still cutting lateral trails between outposts. The regiment also established OPs away from the airdrome perimeter, including several on the coast and along numerous native tracks through the jungle. Most of these were manned by five to ten soldiers, but others, like the

security detail for the naval radar site located away from the main position, required as many as thirty men.<sup>24</sup>

Besides manning and improving OPs and the MLR, the 112th's responsibilities for security included patrolling by land, sea, and air. Reconnaissance by foot began shortly after the unit arrived on Woodlark and soon extended beyond the immediate locale of the base to distant regions of the island. On any given day, the regiment had one or two active patrols. Lasting anywhere from four to ten days, these consisted of four to nine men under the direction of a lieutenant, sometimes accompanied by a native guide. By October, nearly every junior officer in the regiment had experienced at least one such jungle patrol. The 112th also used patrol torpedo boats and the 134th Field Artillery liaison plane (called a Piper Cub) for further reconnaissance. Leaders initially rode with the Cub pilot to check the unit's overhead camouflage. Later, the plane conducted daily flights over the island to check for suspicious activity. Most likely, enemy air attacks triggered this expansion of the Cub's mission.<sup>25</sup>

The Japanese reacted to the landing on Woodlark with reconnaissance flights and ineffective air raids. Pressured by the American offensive in the Solomons, the enemy sent no bombers over Woodlark until almost a month after the 112th landed. Consisting of only one plane that dropped four bombs, the first attack nevertheless led to a higher level of awareness within Leatherback Task Force. Air alerts occurred over the next few days but proved to be false alarms. On the evening of 2 August, two planes dropped approximately twelve bombs on 2d Squadron's sector, wounding four troopers and resulting in superficial structural damage. Although alerts followed in the coming months, this attack was the last to bring any harm to the task force. After the 2 August bombardment, the fighter squadron on Woodlark began air patrols to intercept Japanese aircraft. Marine antiaircraft batteries also played a part in repelling the few

additional forays that came while the 112th garrisoned Woodlark. Though weak and ineffectual, these attacks constituted the regiment's first exposure to the realities of war.<sup>26</sup>

While it was obvious to officers and enlisted men alike that the defense of the airdrome had the highest priority and as such demanded the most time and energy, leaders grasped whatever opportunities they could to prepare their soldiers for ground combat. Given patrols, labor details, OP duty, and continued work on the MLR, these occasions were scarce. Nevertheless, in September, the unit designed an obstacle course, which involved moving through the jungle, detecting partially hidden targets, and firing at them with a pistol. The 112th also conducted several squadron attack problems in October and November, but, since they are mentioned merely as cursory references in diaries, it is difficult to know what these exercises accomplished or how seriously they were taken in light of the unit's busy schedule. The regiment mustered some creative energy by arranging for its 37-mm guns to fire at moving targets in the bay. But with the exception of an assault drill in which Troop G participated, soldiers did not fire their rifles during their entire tour at Woodlark – an astounding observation considering they were there for five months. Construction of a firing range began in early November, but the unit was gone by the end of the month.<sup>27</sup>

Perhaps the most useful training occurred when the task force employed indirect fire. The artillerymen of the 134th first registered their guns on offshore buoy targets on 19 July. The 112th's 60-mm and 81-mm mortars did the same west of the MLR. A few days later, 105-mm howitzers fired on planned targets along the main defensive line and repeated this drill in August. In September, the regiment put together a live fire exercise that involved artillery and mortars. Watching the shells bursting from his position on the MLR, Colonel Miller noted that the drill was helpful – even if the 60-mm rounds landed a little too close to friendly lines. Firing artillery and mortars benefited shooters and observers alike. While crews practiced their



procedures (a necessity for the 60-mm mortar sections manned by ex-horseshoers!), soldiers on the MLR became somewhat accustomed to the sounds of projectiles passing overhead. Finally, coordinating artillery fire and integrating it into the regiment's overall defense provided leaders with an opportunity it had not had at Fort Clark and New Caledonia.<sup>28</sup>

Although the move to a tropical environment exposed the regiment to new health and sanitation challenges, the conditions on Woodlark were such that they posed little problem. To counter the threat of malaria, the command educated troopers on how to protect themselves from the disease's carriers. Prior to leaving New Caledonia, individuals were issued mosquito nets and insect repellent. Men began taking atabrine tablets before their arrival and continued to do so on the island. As was the case with most units serving in SWPA, soldiers were reluctant to take the anti-malarial drug because of its disagreeable side effects. Realizing that his troopers were not taking the required doses, Lieutenant Colonel Grant placed an officer at the end of the 2d Squadron chow line to distribute atabrine pills and ensure they were swallowed. All in all, these measures proved effective. During the period of July to September 1943, the regiment suffered only seventeen malaria cases. According to the 112th's medical officers, garrison duties on Woodlark generally allowed for good hygiene. Critical facilities like kitchens and mess halls were screened and "fly-proofed" in short order. Latrines and garbage pits, typical trouble spots in areas of high troop concentration, presented few sanitation issues once the regiment secured enough dynamite to blast twenty-foot holes deep into the coral.<sup>29</sup>

In occupying Woodlark, the 112th took a step closer to combat, but the benefits of the operation should not be exaggerated. Undoubtedly, there were many missed opportunities – most noticeably in weapons firing – and, though the troopers got to work with and see the effects of 105-mm howitzers, the direct support artillery battalion could have been employed more regularly than it was. The intense month at Townsville provided the 112th with the only time it

had in more than a year overseas to dedicate itself entirely to preparing for combat, for the mission on Woodlark – like that on New Caledonia – made training a secondary priority. To be sure, leaders made honest attempts to conduct realistic training, but, with their men committed elsewhere, these efforts were of dubious worth. Moreover, Leatherback Task Force occupied the island under essentially administrative conditions, and the practical learning acquired must be considered with this in mind.

Even so, the operation helped to prepare the 112th for combat by exposing the unit to environments and experiences that it would put to use in the future. Though not an amphibious assault, the landing on Woodlark introduced the regiment to the various craft in MacArthur's navy and forced its staff to think through the process of effectively loading and unloading men and equipment. Constructing fortifications and integrating obstacles, weapon systems, OPs, and communications into an overall defense were time-consuming tasks but would prove to be critical skills on the Arawe Peninsula. The jungle also had lessons for the 112th. During their first time in a tropical climate, troopers patrolled through dense vegetation and mangrove swamps, gaining a sense of how one led, moved, and survived in this environment. Despite the fact that the men still had much to learn, small but important matters, like using the new jungle ration, were sorted out on Woodlark, not in the face of enemy resistance.<sup>30</sup> Along these lines, the 112th's first operation put it on the receiving end of two minor aerial bombardments – a position it would find itself in many times on New Britain. The responsibilities of Leatherback Task Force stretched the talents of many 112th staff officers, opening their eyes to the world outside the horse cavalry as they coordinated with various services and incorporated units with disparate functions into their organization. The creation of the task force also led to the formation of a separate headquarters within the 112th and brought about a new command arrangement. Despite being awkward, this relationship was established early and apart from the strains of battle.

Senior leaders continued to work together, and, with virtually no personnel turnover, unit cohesion intensified.

As the 112th occupied Woodlark, CARTWHEEL continued steadily along the envisioned axes of advance. On New Guinea, the capture of Finschhafen and the completion of airfields at Lae and Nadzab paved the way for future operations against the Japanese. Seizing a foothold on the island of New Britain was the next logical step for SWPA forces on the way to Rabaul. However, the Joint Chiefs of Staff decided against the assault, opting instead for the neutralization of the base by air. In October 1943, Army Chief of Staff General George C. Marshall informed MacArthur of the change in plans but issued orders to proceed up the New Guinea coast and thence to Mindanao, the southernmost island in the Philippine archipelago. Despite the cancellation of the ground attack on Rabaul, arrangements for the Cape Gloucester operation went forward since an assault on the western tip of New Britain was thought necessary for the continued drive toward the Philippines. Only now, the purpose would be to establish an airdrome capable of covering assault convoys pressing westward.

SWPA and Sixth Army originally planned to supplement the primary landing at Cape Gloucester with an attack on Gasmata. Destroying the enemy at this advanced base on New Britain's southern coast offered key advantages to the Allies, but the choice of this location drew criticism from Barbey and Kenney because its proximity to Rabaul would subject the landing force to bomber strikes that Fifth Air Force would be hard-pressed to parry. In addition, it appeared that the enemy was reinforcing the area. MacArthur and his subordinates met to discuss the issue on 21 November and, the next day, substituted the assault on Gasmata with one eighty miles to the west at Arawe. Because Japanese strength there was presumed to be substantially lower than at Gasmata, Krueger shelved his original plan, which had earmarked a

regimental combat team from the 32d Infantry Division, and called upon the smaller 112th Cavalry.<sup>31</sup>

Short-notice moves were becoming a habit for the 112th. Notified on 24 November 1943 of its impending departure from Woodlark, the regiment hurriedly broke camp and loaded vehicles and equipment onto transports. On 30 November, the first echelon of what would become the core of Director Task Force under recently promoted Brigadier General Cunningham sailed for Goodenough Island, approximately fifty miles north of Milne Bay. The remaining cavalrymen left Woodlark the following morning, and, by the evening of 2 December, the entire regiment had debarked and begun to establish a bivouac area.<sup>32</sup>

Having conducted no significant live firing for five months, the 112th rushed to reacquaint its men with a skill they were certain to employ during their upcoming mission. Over the course of four days at the range on Goodenough Island, soldiers shot only eight rounds from their M-1 rifles and threw one hand grenade. Officers, who had recently received the new .30 caliber carbines, fired these weapons for the first time. Machine gun crews squeezed off fifty bullets each – barely enough to warm up the barrels that had remained cold throughout the extended stay on Woodlark. Months before, one cavalryman per squad had been assigned a modified M-1903 rifle with an attached grenade launcher. On Goodenough Island, soldiers were finally given rifle grenades and an opportunity to fire them. Cramming the tight schedule even further, SWPA issued the regiment several new weapons at the staging area. Squads in the line troops also received one Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR) and one Thompson SMG, and soldiers shot twenty rounds apiece – amounting to only a few bursts from these rapid-fire weapons. Some troopers were also issued 2.36-inch rocket launchers (commonly known as bazookas) and flame throwers. A Sixth Army instructor conducted two days of training on the latter.<sup>33</sup> In short, the 112th went through a perfunctory and inadequate crash program to restore

marksmanship skills. Moreover, it was given a number of new weapons and had little time to learn how to employ them.

In three days of training, the cavalymen also became acquainted with the special boats that would take them to the shores of Arawe. This operation saw SWPA's first use of the LSD (Landing Ship, Dock), a huge vessel designed to transport smaller craft over long distances to a point where they could steam out of its hull and cover the last leg of the voyage to the beach. In addition, LVTs (Landing Vehicles, Tracked) made their debut with Sixth Army and Seventh Amphibious Force. These floating tractors were needed to climb over the coral reefs lying just off Arawe's coast. On 6 December, most soldiers of the regiment boarded an LSD, took their place on assigned LVTs, and went along for the ride when these craft chugged out of the LSD and into the bay. The next day, the force extended the bounds of its familiarity as LVTs plowed ashore and disgorged their passengers upon Goodenough Island. While this training occurred, Troops A and B each spent one day learning how to maneuver the inflatable rafts (or LCRs – Landing Craft, Rubber) that they would use during the operation. The 112th's hasty train-up on amphibious warfare culminated with a dawn landing on 8 December.

This was essentially a rehearsal for the impending mission. While some units paddled in LCRs to secondary objectives, the main force assembled in specified waves of LVTs and steamed ashore in accordance with a staggered time schedule. Cunningham intently watched and vigorously critiqued his troopers as they grappled with the new procedures. While the cavalymen struggled with amphibious assaults, artillerymen, medical personnel, and other members of Director Task Force practiced loading their heavy equipment onto LCTs (Landing Craft, Tank), 118-foot vessels designed to carry their cargo directly to the landing site.<sup>34</sup>

As the troopers trained, senior leaders and their staffs planned, working late into the night on five of the nine full days at Goodenough Island. Quickly, Cunningham pieced together

the various elements of the new Director Task Force, consisting of the 112th, two batteries of 40-mm antiaircraft guns, an engineer construction company, a communications platoon, an evacuation hospital, an air support party, and several logistical units. The task force reserve, 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, would remain at the staging area until needed. One noteworthy change was the substitution of the 134th Field Artillery with another 105-mm howitzer battalion, the 148th. After developing the plan, the task force published a voluminous field order on 8 December. Especially meticulous in its detailed loading diagrams, the directive assigned slots on amphibious craft down to the last field kitchen and trailer.<sup>35</sup>

Jutting southwest from the mainland, the Arawe Peninsula was five thousand yards in length and less than one thousand yards wide in most places. Jagged two hundred-foot cliffs ran along the southeastern edge of the neck. The Amalut Plantation, consisting of scattered coconut trees, covered most of the peninsula. From the bluffs, the terrain sloped gently downward toward the opposite shore, with the plantation yielding to a thin strip of jungle and finally mangrove swamp. Beyond this thin neck, the rest of the mainland was mostly jungle, with several streams and some sparse patches of trees and scrub brush. About one mile east of the base of the peninsula was Umtingalu, a hamlet overlooking a decent landing beach. At the other end was Cape Merkus, the heel of the boot-shaped peninsula. The boot ran to the north for two miles. Along its western coast was the only other tenable landing site in the area. Called House Fireman Beach, it lay where the cliffs tapered off and gave way to another coconut plantation. There were numerous islands offshore, but Pilelo in particular sat one thousand yards south of Cape Merkus.<sup>36</sup>

The plan to secure the Arawe Peninsula closely resembled the 8 December rehearsal. In pre-dawn darkness, soldiers would climb down from the decks of two APDs into LCRs and begin paddling to their separate destinations – Troop B for Pilelo Island, where it would capture

a radio tower, and Troop A for Umtingalu, where it would move from the beach to a position along the enemy's line of retreat from the peninsula. Success in this phase of the operation depended completely on surprise, as commanders expected the rubber boats to approach the shore undetected. As these landings took place, the assault force – consisting primarily of 2d Squadron – would chug out of the LSD and assemble in five waves. Presumably after the LCRs had reached their objectives, destroyers would shell House Fireman Beach, lifting fire as the first echelon landed. The 2d Squadron would clear Cape Merkus and then sweep up the peninsula, driving the defenders into the ambush set by Troop A. In the end, it was hoped that the operation would draw enemy reserves toward the southern portion of New Britain and thus facilitate the seizure of Sixth Army's primary objective at Cape Gloucester eleven days later.<sup>37</sup>

The 112th completed preparations for movement and boarded its transports on 13 December 1943. With MacArthur and Krueger on hand to see them off, the cavalymen departed Goodenough Island the next day. After a brief stop at Buna, New Guinea, the troopships picked up their naval escort and headed for western New Britain. Totalling thirty-six vessels in all, the convoy consisted of ten destroyers, a group of patrol boats and subchasers, and various transports and amphibious craft. In addition to the 112th's Troop C and 1st Squadron headquarters, the H.M.A.S. *Westralia* carried the beach and shore parties that would prepare House Fireman for the arrival and unloading of heavier follow-on craft. Ready to proceed to the beach once naval personnel cleared and marked routes through the reefs, a flotilla of LSTs (Landing Ships, Tank) and smaller LCTs were also in the convoy. Cunningham and his executive officer, Lieutenant Colonel Philip Hooper, rode with Barbey on the destroyer *Conyngham*. Troops A and B of the 112th sailed on two APDs, the *Sands* and *Humphreys* respectively, while 2d Squadron and other elements of Director Task Force traveled on the LSD *Carter Hall* along with the amphibious tractors in its hold. Taking their berths among the

troopers of the assault waves, Miller and Grant rode on the *Carter Hall*. As the convoy steamed toward Arawe, leaders conducted final inspections and, with the assistance of maps and aerial photographs, briefed their men on their roles in upcoming mission.<sup>38</sup>

With the exception of a flyover by an enemy reconnaissance plane, the voyage to the objective was uneventful. Transports hove to at the debarkation points around 0400 on the morning of 15 December 1943. From a cloudless sky, the quarter-moon's light silhouetted ships against the horizon as soldiers boarded their assigned craft. At approximately 0500, the *Carter Hall* emptied its cargo. With their engines grinding noisily, the LVTs churned through the calm sea and assembled five miles from House Fireman Beach. Simultaneously, 1st Squadron (less detachments) started debarking from the *Westralia* on two LCMs (Landing Craft, Mechanized) and seventeen LCVs (Landing Craft, Vehicle). In the meantime, troopers on the *Sands* and *Humphreys* had hustled into inflatable rafts and, in formations of fifteen LCRs each, began paddling to their destinations roughly one thousand yards away.<sup>39</sup>

Around 0525, Troop A came under heavy automatic weapons fire as it closed to within one hundred yards of the beach. Observers from the nearby destroyer *Shaw* witnessed flashes from the shoreline but had lost sight of the cavalrymen in the dusky twilight. Unable to identify any targets and not sure whether the troopers had landed, the captain of the *Shaw* held his fire. Meanwhile, the bullets of a 25-mm antiaircraft gun tore into Troop A's rubber boats, sinking all but three of them. Panicked men jumped overboard to escape the shower of projectiles, shedding their equipment and clothing to stay afloat. On Barbey's flagship, Cunningham fumed at the admiral for not ordering the *Shaw* to return fire. When the naval commander refused to override the destroyer captain, the incensed and astounded general – who had lost all contact with Troop A – had Hooper check the time on his watch. After more than twenty minutes, the *Shaw* opened fire with one salvo and silenced the enemy position near Umtingalu. Nearby



vessels quickly swooped in and picked up most of the survivors. In all, the troop lost twelve killed, seventeen wounded, and four missing.<sup>40</sup> Failure was complete. Sixth Army never again attempted a company-sized rubber-boat landing.

Upon seeing the flurry of tracers and hearing the eruption of automatic weapons fire from Umtingalu, Troop B changed its course ninety degrees and made haste for its alternate landing site on the west shore of Pilelo. Meeting no resistance on the beach, the cavalrymen pushed north along the coast to its first objective, moving – as one participant remembered – like an “armed posse” with little regard for unit integrity.<sup>41</sup> When the troop received fire from two caves, the commander left ten men to contain this threat and continued on to the island’s high ground, where the supposed radio tower was located. Finding no tower, most of the unit returned to mop-up the marginal resistance on the northern tip of Pilelo. There, Troop B conducted what amounted to a field test of its new weapons. Bazooka fire pummeled one cave entrance, which collapsed, trapping an estimated eight enemy. Protected by built-up logs, the other cave proved impervious to rocket launcher and machine gun fire. The flame thrower team came forward and discharged its weapon from a distance of fifteen yards. Hand grenades were tossed into the entrance closely behind the stream of fire. Troopers rushed the cave and found the bodies of seven Japanese. All resistance on the island ended by 1130.<sup>42</sup>

While the drama of the subsidiary landings unfolded, the LVTs carrying the main assault force assembled with some difficulty in the pre-dawn darkness. After debarking from the *Carter Hall*, the first wave started for Arawe ahead of schedule. Poor visibility and frequent communications failures among the amphibious tractors added to the confusion, and, in the end, organized movement toward the beach was delayed for over an hour. The force consisted of five waves that were supposed to arrive at the landing site in five-minute intervals, beginning at 0600. Ten LVT(A)’s – commonly referred to as “Buffaloes” – made up the first and contained

the bulk of Troops E and F from the 112th. Two amphibious trucks (called DUKWs) rigged with 4.5-inch rocket pods accompanied the initial echelon. The next three waves were each comprised of eight LVTs of a different type – the more lightly armored “Alligators.” They carried the remainder of 2d Squadron, the machine guns and mortars of Weapons Troop, the 148th Field Artillery’s advanced party, an air liaison section, medical and communications personnel, troopers from the 112th’s Pioneer and Demolition Platoon, command and control elements, and a few combat photographers. Consisting of five Alligators, the fifth wave contained a mix of support personnel and war correspondents. As a result of the troubles that morning, the initial wave did not land at House Fireman Beach until 0723. Slower and more prone to mechanical problems, the Alligators in the second wave lagged twenty-five minutes behind the Buffaloes in the first. The sloppy but successful assault landing concluded when the final three waves arrived simultaneously in the harbor fifteen minutes later.<sup>43</sup>

By the time Troops E and F waded ashore, air and naval bombardment had done much to destroy or discourage enemy opposition. On the day before the landing, General Kenney’s planes dropped 433 tons of bombs on Arawe in what he called “the heaviest raid in the Pacific war up to that time.”<sup>44</sup> As the assault waves ferried the troopers over the five-mile course to House Fireman Beach, Barbey’s destroyers fired eighteen hundred five-inch shells in a fifteen-minute period ending around 0630. Shortly afterward, one of the three squadrons of B-25 bombers on standby delivered their payloads up and down the peninsula. Several remained on station until after the entire assault force made it ashore. When they were eight hundred yards from the beach, the Buffaloes took fire from a lone machine gun, but several rockets launched from supporting naval vessels and the DUKWs on each flank of the initial assault wave quickly and violently ended this hapless resistance.<sup>45</sup>

Scrambling ashore at House Fireman Beach, Grant's 2d Squadron re consolidated and began its advance inland. One reinforced platoon from Troop F pushed northwest from Cape Merkus to clear the boot of the peninsula. The remainder of this troop proceeded alongside Troop E up the thin neck into the coconut plantation. Troop G trailed them. Buffaloes attempted to move forward with the lead elements as planned but encountered a steep rise just off the beach. This obstacle, along with the mangrove swamp along the left flank, delayed their progress. Consequently, only two of the armored vehicles with their mounted .50 caliber machine guns were able to provide immediate fire support. However, this had little impact on operations as the cavalrymen swept three miles up the peninsula against only scattered opposition. On the right flank, soldiers from Troop E saw the most action, killing seven Japanese who emerged from the jagged terrain along the top of the coastal cliffs. By 1430, 2d Squadron had secured its final objective. Troopers grabbed their entrenching tools and began to construct the regiment's MLR across the base of the peninsula while leaders organized patrols to probe north and east into the jungle.<sup>46</sup>

As 2d Squadron moved up the neck, the remainder of the task force debarked at Cape Merkus. Accompanying the initial wave of LVTs, naval personnel in small boats had marked passages to House Fireman through the coral reefs. Shortly after 0800, Major Harry E. Werner's 1st Squadron headquarters and Troop C, the regimental reserve, poured out of heavier landing craft from the *Westralia*. When the first LCTs arrived in the harbor an hour or so later, the disadvantages of Sixth Army's decision to use an ad hoc shore party were made clear. The beach became quite congested, as did the waters off House Fireman, where several craft milled around looking for a place to land. Unloading continued throughout the morning and into the afternoon as LCTs dropped their ramps, allowing jeeps, trucks, howitzers, antiaircraft guns, engineer equipment, as well as drivers and crews to pile ashore.<sup>47</sup>

As the heavy equipment moved onto Cape Merkus, a flight of twenty to thirty Japanese planes broke through Fifth Air Force's screen of P-38 Lightnings and swarmed over the peninsula. For five minutes, enemy fighters and bombers attacked House Fireman Beach, craft in the crowded harbor, and naval vessels lingering offshore. In the first of several bombardments the 112th would experience on Arawe, troopers huddled in craters blasted into the coral during the earlier B-25 strikes and added their small arms fire to the chorus of naval anti-aircraft guns. Miraculously, few Japanese shells found their targets. One LCV was sunk without loss of life.<sup>48</sup>

As the day progressed, the regiment tightened its control over the peninsula. Using Alligators as weapons carriers, the 112th moved its heavy machine guns and mortars into position to support 2d Squadron. By early afternoon, the howitzers of the 148th were ready to fire, and Battery B conducted a registration with eighteen rounds to improve the battalion's accuracy. At 1300, a reinforced platoon from Troop C investigated the rugged terrain running along the east coast of the neck from Cape Merkus. Combing the crevasses of the over-hanging cliffs, the cavalrymen killed two enemy riflemen and came across several Japanese dead and many pieces of equipment, including two field guns – presumably abandoned during the intense American bombardment. However, the sweep through this troublesome spot was not thorough enough, and, when Japanese snipers climbed up from one of the defiles to harass the regimental CP, the 112th began to gain an appreciation for the enemy's ability to use natural camouflage and terrain to good advantage. Miller dispatched a detachment from Headquarters Troop to silence the snipers and, in the meantime, bolstered the security of the rear area. Most of Troop C, a platoon of heavy machine guns from Weapons Troop, and elements of the Reconnaissance and Pioneer and Demolition Platoons formed a ring around the CP and later that night repulsed another Japanese probe from the cliffs around Cape Merkus. By the end of the first day,

Director Task Force had over sixteen hundred men on the ground at Arawe – over one thousand of them from the 112th. Excluding the casualties from Troop A's disaster, the regiment suffered five soldiers killed and four wounded in action.<sup>49</sup>

From 16 to 24 December 1943, the Americans on Arawe improved their defenses and searched the surrounding area for any remaining Japanese. Most of Troop B left Pilelo and joined the regiment on the mainland. Troop A was re-equipped by airdrop and, for the most part, was replenished with the arrival of fifty replacements. Troopers cleared fields of fire along the MLR, lay wire entanglements and mines in front of their fighting positions, and improved wire communications between units. The 59th Engineer Combat Company demonstrated its versatility by starting work on supply roads, CP bunkers, underground facilities for aid stations, and an emergency torpedo boat jetty. Daily combat patrols checked the swamp and cliff sides of the neck from the MLR back to the reserve line closer to Cape Merkus. Others ventured out from the peninsula to reconnoiter the network of native trails along the coast and through the jungle. Water-borne amphibious craft from the 2d Engineer Special Brigade supported detachments moving on the shoreline, firing into the thick vegetation with their heavy machine guns as the cavalymen advanced. LCMs and LCVs also assisted patrols by transporting and supplying them during certain phases of their mission. The 112th began manning several OPs in nearby villages, key locations throughout the peninsula, and on Pilelo and other offshore islands. Following an artillery bombardment, Troop G occupied the village of Umtingalu. It established a forward patrol base there, dug fighting positions, and set up two OPs on the route back to the MLR. The only ground combat occurred amid the thick undergrowth of the crevasses and cliffs around Cape Merkus. By night, Japanese raiding parties attempted to infiltrate the task force rear area. Over the course of the week, elements of Troops C and E rooted out the last ten to twenty enemy defenders, finally clearing this position on 23 December.<sup>50</sup>

Although Japanese soldiers remaining on and around the peninsula offered only light resistance, air attacks based out of Rabaul were frequent and furious. Fighters from Fifth Air Force intercepted incoming flights many times – especially in the first days following the 15 December landing – but never with enough force to break up the attacks completely. For two weeks, multiple raids took place almost daily – mostly in the early morning hours. During this period, over 350 planes flew against Arawe, strafing House Fireman Beach and dropping approximately 570 bombs on supply dumps and vessels involved in unloading operations. Sorties in December put several landing craft and their escorts out of action. Less severe was the toll taken on forces ashore, as the regiment suffered no casualties – only sleepless nights, fear, frustration and minor damage to equipment.<sup>51</sup> Fortunately, enemy air attacks – though numerous – were not effective. This threat decreased further as U.S. strikes from the Solomons pummeled Rabaul and as American fighters bested the Japanese in air-to-air combat over New Britain. During January, only 145 bombs fell on Arawe, and, in the first ten days of February, this number dropped to thirty.<sup>52</sup>

In addition to launching repeated waves of Rabaul-based aircraft against Arawe, the Japanese dispatched ground forces to the southern coast of West New Britain with the mission of containing the American lodgment on Cape Merkus. Making his way to Arawe via barge when Director Task Force landed, Major Masamitsu Komori received orders on 17 December to step up the pace of his westward advance and prepare to attack U.S. defenses on the peninsula. Transferred from China to New Britain along with most of the 17th Division, Komori's 1st Battalion, 81st Infantry Regiment would be joined by Major Asyuke Tobushi's battalion – the 1st of the 141st Infantry, veterans of the 1941-1942 conquest of Luzon. Komori would command both formations. Whereas the enemy that initially occupied Arawe before the crushing U.S. bombardment consisted of but a company or two, this combined force numbered

around six hundred men. However, due to battle casualties and delays in movement, the Japanese opposing the 112th would never reach that strength at any one time. Logistically supported on a shoestring and armed with nothing heavier than a few 75-mm field guns, these soldiers, all the same, possessed high morale.<sup>53</sup>

Completing a forced march on 19 December to a position approximately ten miles northeast of the peninsula, Komori paused briefly and incorporated the recent occupants of Arawe into his command. He spoke with witnesses of the American landing and mistakenly concluded that those who had fled the peninsula had grossly overestimated the strength of the assault force. The next day, Komori issued orders for the attack. The persistent sound of U.S. reconnaissance planes overhead failed to dissuade him. Before long, he would discover that the Americans digging in on the peninsula outnumbered him by a margin of over three to one. These odds worsened with the discouraging news that Tobushi's battalion approaching from the west would not arrive in time for Komori's planned assault. Nevertheless, the commander pushed forward, determined to strike as soon as possible.<sup>54</sup>

Despite the absence of Japanese ground forces in the area, the 112th saw signs of an impending counterattack. A patrol pressing west along the coast in two LCVs ran into ten Japanese barges several miles from Cape Merkus on 18 December. With their landing craft damaged in the ensuing firefight, the twenty-man detachment escaped by wading into a mangrove swamp and taking shelter in a nearby village. A native accompanying the patrol returned to Arawe and reported the incident on 21 December, and, the next day, others made their way back to the peninsula by canoe. Around the same time, a similar LCV patrol sailing east some miles beyond Umtingalu took heavy automatic weapons fire from several barges in the area and was forced to withdraw to Cape Merkus. Reports of additional enemy barge activity

the night of 23 December caused quite a stir at task force headquarters, and Cunningham rightly concluded that the Japanese were converging on Arawe from the east and west.<sup>55</sup>

The hammer fell on Christmas day. Two platoon-sized patrols moving by truck northeast of Umtingalu were ambushed and driven back to the village, arriving there at 1045 and assuming defensive positions alongside elements of Troop G. The regimental intelligence officer happened to be in the vicinity and took charge of the outpost as it braced for an attack by approximately thirty to forty Japanese. Throughout the day, the Americans fended off a few enemy attempts to turn their left flank and killed at least three Japanese without suffering any casualties themselves. Nevertheless, believing that the force half-heartedly engaged with the 112th at Umtingalu was merely the advanced party for a larger contingent approaching from Gasmata, Cunningham recalled the troopers manning the outpost to a more secure area behind the MLR.<sup>56</sup>

Komori attacked at 2230 that night, sending forty to fifty infantrymen against the task force's right flank. Moving among the crevasses along the coastal bluffs, they overran a few positions before 60-mm mortar fire drove them off. In this action, the 112th lost one man killed and eight wounded and estimated that it had inflicted twelve enemy casualties, though only one body was recovered. For his part, Komori was extremely disappointed. American artillery fire and aerial bombardment during the afternoon not only killed and wounded some of his men but had also disrupted his forces as they assembled. Substantially weaker to begin with because of the absence of Tobushi's battalion, the attack was uncoordinated and not pressed especially hard.<sup>57</sup>

Over the next few days, the Japanese continued their forays against the 112th's line with little success. Komori launched night attacks against the regiment's right flank on 26 and 27 December. Consisting of only about fifteen men each, these assaults were repulsed by mortar



fire with few U.S. losses. On the 29th, he shifted his focus to the other side of the neck and dispatched a raiding party of twenty to thirty soldiers to destroy the mortar sections that had given his forces so much trouble. Wading through the swamp on the 112th's left, this detachment slipped undetected passed the MLR but was discovered before it emerged from the mangrove trees. The 112th responded to the threat vigorously, and an intense fight ensued. Pounded with mortar fire and engaged throughout the day by elements of three troops and a platoon from the recently arrived 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry Regiment, the Japanese lost seventeen men. After this failed attempt, Komori limited his offensive movements to probes against U.S. forces and concentrated on improving his own positions.

The situation evolved into a stalemate as the Japanese established a defensive line along the base of the peninsula. 112th patrols following the Christmas night attack met resistance soon after they left the OPLR and entered the jungle. On 28 December, elements of Troop B struck out for Umtingalu but were checked by snipers and light mortar shelling. Patrols ran into opposition on the left flank as well. Machine gun and rifle fire pinned down a platoon from Troop C after it had advanced only one thousand yards beyond friendly lines. Unable to make further progress and suffering six casualties, it withdrew. On 1 January 1944, a squad on reconnaissance toward Umtingalu spotted approximately twenty-five Japanese soldiers digging in two hundred yards from the OPLR.

Later that morning, Troop B launched the first of several RCT attacks on the enemy position. The initial assault suffered a setback when errant artillery rounds fell on the troop as it started forward. It got no better as soldiers neared the objective, where the cavalymen slammed into a wall of rifle, machine gun, and mortar fire and were compelled to break off the attack. In its effort that day, the troop lost three killed and fifteen wounded. Over the next two days, patrols investigating the activity just beyond the OPLR heard several voices and the

unmistakable sounds of construction as men cut down underbrush and moved logs to their positions. Some reconnaissance detachments even moved close enough to observe groups of ten or so Japanese emplacing light machine guns on the reverse slope of a small ridge to the 112th's right front. On 4 January, Troop G pushed through a screen of scattered sniper fire but made no headway against the remarkably formidable enemy defenses, which were by this time concealed and skillfully arranged. The unit suffered three killed and twenty-one wounded.<sup>58</sup> Director Task Force and the 112th adjusted their methods slightly, but attempts on 6, 7, and 11 January yielded only casualties and frustration.<sup>59</sup>

At the same time, these failed assaults taught the regiment some hard lessons and spawned adaptation. In the attacks from 1-11 January, units incorporated various techniques as they tried to break Komori's line. The attempt following Troop B's abortive 1 January assault went forward without close artillery support in the hope of attaining surprise (and – one could surmise – to avoid more casualties due to friendly fire). LCMs strafed Umtingalu in the Japanese rear and approached the beach to give the impression that a landing was about to occur there. However, achieving tactical surprise in the jungle meant more than foregoing a preparatory bombardment and staging a diversion. It also required knowing something about how the opponent defended. During the futile 4 January attack, the 112th had ceded the benefits of firepower for nothing but learned from its error. In subsequent efforts, the regiment reinstated the usual artillery and mortar bombardments on enemy positions – once, trailing closely behind a “creeping” barrage. Director Task Force also coordinated supporting air strikes when they were available.

After an initial reluctance to move close enough to observe the enemy, small patrols acquired tactical savvy. Gaining exposure to Komori's defenses through increasingly aggressive patrolling, troopers began to detect and avoid the carefully cut and well-hidden fire lanes

radiating from machine gun nests. To counter the threat of snipers during the advance, leaders designated men to scan the treetops – the likely source of this disconcerting fire. Though they represented some degree of progress, none of these measures yielded overall success.<sup>60</sup>

In retrospect, what stands out is that Cunningham never launched a determined attack to eliminate the Japanese to his front. Of his attempts, just one involved a force larger than a 150-man cavalry troop, and, on that occasion, only Troop C and a recently arrived infantry company were committed to the assault. Moreover, the first troop-sized blow came days after reconnaissance patrols reported that the Japanese were in the process of digging in two hundred yards from the OPLR. It is perplexing that no concerted effort took place sooner. Why did Cunningham wait to move against the enemy? When he finally attacked, why did he employ such a small portion of the soldiers at his disposal?

Hooper's answer to these questions reveals the downside of unit cohesion. Since landing at Arawe and especially after 25 December, the regiment – rifle troops in particular – had lost men almost everyday. For an outfit that had been together two years (in the case of former Texas Guardsmen, the time spent in the unit was probably much longer), this daily trickle of casualties took a heavy psychological toll. Even the fire-breathing Cunningham did not escape its effect. With their men secure, well-supplied, and relatively comfortable behind the MLR, senior leaders of the 112th saw little value in undertaking a major operation against an enemy whom they could not see through the dense jungle undergrowth. The Cape Gloucester landing had come and gone, and, successful or not, the diversion at Arawe had played itself out. Having taken all the ground necessary to complete his mission, Cunningham was hesitant to mount wasteful attacks that might only result in additional casualties. Indications that Komori was receiving reinforcements discouraged further tactical experimentation. The circumstances of independent command influenced the handling of the campaign as well. With no serious

pressure from Sixth Army, Director Task Force could simply bide its time and improve its defenses. “We were timid,” Hooper admitted candidly.<sup>61</sup>

Cunningham’s executive officer was probably too harsh in his explanation, for it must be remembered that nothing in the regiment’s training prepared it for the challenge Komori offered. The 112th tried what it knew and was repeatedly repulsed. Leaders discovered, for example, that the terrain made envelopment extremely difficult and that such a maneuver was impossible when the location of the enemy’s flank was unknown.<sup>62</sup> Uncertain of how to proceed, the regiment adapted, saving lives by waiting for reinforcements and additional firepower.

Although it had thwarted a number of American assaults, Komori’s force was in desperate straits. The arrival of Tobushi’s contingent of roughly two hundred men on 28 December alleviated the situation somewhat, but, woefully outnumbered and outgunned, the Japanese at Arawe could only hope to contain their enemy and prevent them from capturing the prewar airdrome four miles east of Umtingalu (which, in fact, the Allies did not want). Though pleased with his soldiers’ stouthearted defense, Komori had little else to cheerfully consider. Sickness and hunger began to take their toll. Rations steadily decreased and were exhausted completely by 10 January. His men hunted wild pigs, scoured native gardens for potatoes, and harvested coconuts from the jungle. Dysentery ran rampant throughout the command. All rejoiced when a barge averted detection and landed on the coast with supplies on the night of 12 January. Combat too had worn down the Japanese. By the second week of 1944, their total casualties were at least sixty-five killed, fifty-seven wounded, and fourteen missing in action. If Americans entertained any doubts about the effects of their artillery and mortar fire on enemy morale, Komori’s diary would have assured them otherwise. A lieutenant from Tobushi’s battalion described the amount of damage caused by shelling to be “amazing and surprising.”<sup>63</sup>

While the Japanese along the base of the peninsula grew weaker, Director Task Force gathered reinforcements with the purpose of smashing their doomed opponents. Convinced that multiple enemy detachments were moving toward Arawe, Cunningham had requested on 24 December that Sixth Army release the task force reserve to his control. Granting this, Krueger ordered most of the untested but well-trained 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry to begin movement to Cape Merkus from Goodenough Island. Company G landed at House Fireman Beach on 27 December, and two of the remaining three companies arrived during the first week of January. After an infantry assault on 6 January failed to break the Japanese line, Cunningham asked for tank support and more men to bring an end to the seemingly futile American attacks. In response, the Sixth Army commander dispatched the last uncommitted company of 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry to Arawe, along with a company of light tanks from the 1st Marine Division. At its height, Director Task Force totaled 4,750 combat and support personnel.<sup>64</sup>

While daily reconnaissance patrols looked for changes in enemy disposition along the base of the peninsula, Cunningham assembled his units for the attack that would finally shatter the last significant enemy resistance at Arawe. On the morning of 16 January 1944, a flight of heavy bombers dropped eighty-seven tons of ordnance on a six hundred by one thousand-yard box covering the Japanese positions. After forty minutes of shelling and strafing by the air force, the 148th Field Artillery began a twenty-minute barrage before shifting to deeper targets. Mortars from the 112th and the 158th Infantry joined the action as well, and, from offshore, LCMs peppered the position with automatic weapons fire. At 0950, Companies E and F moved forward, each unit preceded by an armored platoon. Troop C with three tanks attached constituted the reserve for the attack force. The assault proceeded smoothly in the left sector but became bogged down on the right as Company F advanced against the more fortified portion of Komori's defenses. Separated somehow from their accompanying tanks, the infantrymen were

pinned down by machine gun fire and remained so until additional armor could relieve the pressure. Troop C was committed at 1200 to mop-up a pocket of resistance to the rear of the lead units, suffering casualties when one platoon stumbled into a minefield and came under rifle fire.

By mid-afternoon, the task force had driven the Japanese from the position. Other elements from the 112th advanced cautiously behind the attacking units, cleared the underbrush as they went, and established a new OPLR close to the objective. Their mission complete, Troop C and the two infantry companies withdrew behind the MLR at 1715. The next morning, demolition teams and a detachment of bulldozers came forward and destroyed the foxholes and coconut-log pillboxes of Komori's line. Director counted the losses inflicted on the Japanese: a 75-mm field gun, 10 machine guns, and 139 enemy dead. This came at a cost of twenty-two Americans killed and sixty-four wounded.<sup>65</sup>

After 16 January 1944, all major combat in the 112th's area of operations ceased. Thinking incorrectly that the Americans wanted to seize the airdrome east of Umtingalu, Komori fell back several miles, dug in at the airfield, and resolved to "fight until the glorious end" in its defense.<sup>66</sup> By this point, the Japanese commander had lost 116 killed and 117 wounded. Fourteen of his malnourished men had died of illness while approximately eighty were sick. For the most part, combat over the next month transpired only during random encounters between the patrols of each side. Contact became even more infrequent after Komori received orders to withdraw on 24 February. Thereafter, Director Task Force expanded its control over the region by establishing numerous outposts further up the coast and into the jungle and by extending the range of its patrols. One such patrol, led by Major McMains and consisting of one cavalry platoon and about seventy natives, covered nearly one hundred miles in two weeks as it trekked across the rough interior of southern New Britain. The task force also conducted two squadron-

sized operations at the end of February in order to eliminate suspected enemy concentrations but found only evacuated bivouac sites and a few stragglers.<sup>67</sup> The regiment's casualties during the major fighting amounted to 72 killed, 142 wounded, and 4 missing. Over the same period, the Japanese at Arawe lost 304 killed and 3 captured.<sup>68</sup>

Aside from the possible threat of enemy stragglers, the 112th's pattern of activity after Komori's force withdrew closely resembled operations on Woodlark. With the threat of infiltration markedly reduced, troopers no longer slept in their foxholes and began to enjoy the relative luxury of tents. When the enemy departed, so too did the regiment's chief justification for avoiding work details. Thus in March, detachments of roughly forty men reported periodically to the jetty near House Fireman to assist in the unloading of supplies. As a matter of standard procedure, the 112th devoted much time to improving its defensive positions along the MLR and OPLR and enlisted native labor in this endeavor. Tactical missions and fatigue duty aside, the unit instituted a regular training schedule that focused on a narrow field of relevant and necessary skills, particularly for the 10 officer and 111 enlisted replacements who had arrived on the peninsula at the end of January.

While there was plenty of work to be done, leisure had its place. During daylight hours, troopers occupied themselves with baseball, fishing, and swimming. On 3 March, Cunningham lifted blackout restrictions, allowing the base to have lights on until 2200. This directive permitted outdoor movies, and the regiment began showing three per week. Some soldiers were fortunate enough to have a two-week furlough in Australia during April while others – one officer and twenty enlisted men – left the unit altogether for rotation back to the United States in May. This three-month period of training, recovery, and continued patrolling ended in early June 1944 when Sixth Army dissolved Director Task Force and alerted the 112th for movement to New Guinea.<sup>69</sup> Yet coming in the wake of the regiment's first combat experience, this time

afforded leaders an opportunity to reflect on what the unit had learned and to address those weaknesses through training and procedural changes.

The regiment's introduction to defending against ground attack came during its first days on Arawe. Used to the extensive field fortifications it built and manned on Woodlark, the troopers attempted to garner as much protection as they could from hasty positions while they coped with the problem of an enemy force in their rear. Aware of the twenty to thirty-man force cut off in the rough terrain around the cliffs of Cape Merkus, leaders close to that area knew enough to prepare for an attack from any direction and positioned several elements in a perimeter around the CP. In this formation, the cavalrymen fended off repeated probes from would-be infiltrators over the course of several nights following the 15 December landing.

As reconnaissance patrols pushed further inland, the 112th's priorities on the peninsula itself reflected both common sense and a desire to secure its foothold against future attacks. Soldiers set about eliminating the pocket of resistance along the cliffs while 2d Squadron began the laborious but necessary task of transforming its initial positions at the jungle's edge into a series of strongpoints built around light and heavy machine guns and supported by a thin screen of OPs six hundred yards to its front. By the time Komori arrived with his detachment and counterattacked on 25 December, the 112th had cleared fields of fire, laid wire obstacles, established communications between units, and emplaced some anti-personnel mines. During the next few nights, the enemy commander threw twenty to fifty men against the regiment's right flank, but the cavalrymen parried each blow – mainly with the help of mortar fire.<sup>70</sup>

Along with this overall success came lessons that were impossible to learn during the quiet months on Woodlark, where the troopers defended against nothing more than the jungle. The Japanese, of course, were enemies of a different sort. Some distinctions were obvious from the start. Though sleeping on jungle hammocks prevented unpleasant tussles with Woodlark's



wild pigs, this practice was extremely dangerous on Arawe, and soldiers knowingly avoided it. Other realizations came with experience. For instance, the swamp on the 112th's left flank was perceived as impassable until 29 December, when it became a path for Japanese infiltrators en route to the task force's rear. Although this raid was stopped before arriving at its objective, it did succeed in making leaders more vigilant. To counter such threats, the 112th eventually employed hundreds of natives to cut down mangrove trees so that the area could be more easily observed. Individual foxholes – similar to those the troopers dug on Woodlark – proved impractical in combat, and the regiment soon changed over to three-man positions, which enabled soldiers to sleep in shifts throughout the night. It took some time for the cavalymen to learn not to leave their foxholes once darkness fell, as such sojourns attracted grenades and rifle fire from nervous men in nearby positions. Indeed, the regiment suffered casualties in the first days from such incidents. In his after action report, the Sixth Army commander noted the disturbing problem of “promiscuous firing” or “trigger happiness.” To curtail it, he recommended a thorough combing of the surrounding terrain and the emplacement of several obstacles. According to Krueger, these practical steps in guarding against aggressors would impart some degree of reassurance to defenders, as the measures “tend to convince the troops that there is no enemy present.”<sup>71</sup>

After the decisive combined arms assault that drove Komori's detachment away from the peninsula, the 112th redoubled its efforts to fortify the MLR and OPLR. This was familiar ground for the regiment. Indeed, much work had already been done. From 26 December until 16 January, the logistics officer (S-4) issued the squadrons over thirty-five thousand sandbags and six hundred rolls of barbed wire (five more miles of wire were on requisition) for use on the MLR. Supplied with machetes, picks, axes, shovels, and at least one power saw, troopers cleared undergrowth and felled trees to their front. Machine gun positions and CP bunkers were

reinforced with coconut logs and sandbags and eventually connected by trenches. Improvement of the less formidable OPLR continued as well, with one troop pushing out a few hundred yards – where it met moderate resistance and took cover. Behind this temporary screen, other units worked for several hours to extend the outpost line's field of fire. Once the Japanese retreated to the airdrome, squadrons (assisted by native labor) cleared their sectors even further – in the end, out to one thousand yards beyond the MLR. The S-4 delivered new machetes, sharpened dull ones, and resumed the generous distribution of sandbags and wire, giving subordinate elements the tools necessary to establish a new OPLR forward of the old one. Before long, this was built up to a standard comparable to the main defensive line. By the first week of February, the OPLR contained several machine gun emplacements and had wire entanglements strewn across its front.<sup>72</sup> Units rotated through duty on the new OPLR – one cavalry troop at a time, changing out every morning.<sup>73</sup>

In their advanced stages, the 112th's defensive lines consisted of numerous direct and indirect fire weapon systems. Constituting the backbone of the position, ten to fifteen heavy machine guns and about sixteen light machine guns formed interlocking fields of fire from bunkers along the MLR. The OPLR contained a smaller amount of heavy and light machine guns – perhaps two and four respectively. Six 37-mm antitank guns were spread across the length of the MLR. These weapons were equipped to fire canister and did so with deadly effect during at least one night attack on Arawe. The task force also had two 40-mm anti-aircraft guns in its arsenal, employing them in a ground combat role on at least three occasions. Located near Cape Merkus, these weapons had a direct shot over water to the mainland and fired at Japanese in the vicinity of Umtingalu after patrols in the area reported their presence.

Also dug in close to Cape Merkus, the three four-gun batteries of the 148th Field Artillery Battalion were set to fire on predetermined concentration areas. A band of these areas

spanned the eight hundred-yard front roughly two to three hundred yards ahead of the OPLR. A concentration area was divided into three one hundred-square-yard boxes, with each assigned to a battery. In response to a forward observer's request to shell a specific concentration area, a battery would fire across the width and throughout the depth of its designated box. A separate band, where the "final defense barrage" would fall, was placed on the OPLR itself.

Mortars were consolidated in order to deliver a more powerful strike on a single target. Two 81-mm mortar batteries (one from the cavalry regiment and one from 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry) were dug in behind the MLR. At the start of the campaign, the 112th continued to operate only six of its twelve 60-mm mortars, assigning three to each squadron. Of the six, one was positioned forward and placed under the control of the OPLR commander for the explicit purpose of firing illumination rounds. Similar to artillery batteries, mortar sections had designated concentration boxes, including a set just one to three hundred yards in front of the MLR. Combat on Arawe convinced the regiment's senior leaders that the advantages of employing all twelve of the 60-mm mortars would outweigh the costs involved with manning them. Consequently, the regiment filled out the six empty mortar crews after the major fighting on the peninsula ended. Though the twelve tubes were distributed evenly among the rifle troops, the 112th retained the option of consolidating its 60-mm mortars in the defense if necessary.<sup>74</sup>

Granted little exposure to anti-personnel devices, such as mines and "booby bombs," the 112th had to develop procedures to safely incorporate them into its defense of the Arawe Peninsula. Minefields were laid along the MLR and at the Umtingalu outpost in time for the 25 December Japanese counterattack. After this hurried installation to meet the immediate threat, the regiment adopted more centralized procedures. By January, the only troopers authorized to emplace anti-personnel devices were those of the Pioneer and Demolition Platoon. The 112th learned crucial lessons about the employment of anti-personnel devices soon after integrating

them into the overall defense. First of all, such devices could not be indiscriminately planted or neglected once emplaced. To be effective, minefields had to be covered by fire, and, if laid in isolated locations or in positions subject to evacuation on short notice, mines would likely fall into the hands of enemy soldiers, who disarmed them and used them for their own purposes. Placement of booby bombs required careful management also. Typically, men rigged hand grenades by attaching them to the trunks of low-lying bushes. They tied two trip wires to the grenade's pin, ran them out from this hidden position at a ninety-degree angle, and fastened them to other bushes twenty-five yards away. The 112th found out that, over time, the growth of the surrounding vegetation tightened trip wires, making them difficult to remove and highly sensitive to detonation by falling tree limbs and small animals.<sup>75</sup>

Although the experience of building fortifications on Woodlark facilitated the effort on Arawe, exposure to the enemy prompted adaptation that never occurred during the 112th's first SWPA posting. Repeated grenade attacks from unseen infiltrators led one machine gunner to suggest that the unit erect a twenty-foot-high chicken wire barricade in front of selected positions. Drawing on their success with massing mortars, cavalry troops in the defense sometimes consolidated the grenade dischargers assigned to each rifle squad in order to fire barrages at the same target. Soldiers discovered that arranging burlap strips around firing ports made the muzzle blast of machine guns less noticeable, and, after a few nights of Japanese attacks, they learned to control their fire and not to squeeze the trigger until a target appeared in their sights. The presence of the enemy led to innovations in personal comfort as well. Hammocks, "log cabins," and the like were not permitted on Arawe for months. However, according to the 112th's historical report for the operation, soldiers compensated and made "surprising improvement[s]" through the "skillful use of ponchos, shelter-half [*sic*] and small

pieces of canvas under camouflage, as protection against the rain, drainage ditches and arrangements for [the] placing of equipment and personal articles.”<sup>76</sup>

The Japanese never tested the 112th’s extensive preparations of the MLR and OPLR on Arawe. Nevertheless, the procedures involved in manning them reveal much about how the regiment planned to defend against the enemy if he ever returned. The relentless tearing down of vegetation, emplacing of obstacles, and building of fortifications were carried out with the advantages of firepower in mind. With clear fields of fire and observation, the Americans set the conditions for the successful employment of their machine guns, mortars, and artillery. At the same time, they distanced themselves from the jungle, filled that space with wire and mines, and thus offset the strengths their enemy possessed in stealth and surprise.

No doubt there was a tradeoff, and leaders realized this. The historical report noted, “We made efforts to camouflage, and in some cases buildings and other installations were well-camouflaged from the air, but in general, ground camouflage was poor.”<sup>77</sup> However, this admission reflected not laziness or a lack of tactical savvy but a choice among alternatives – more concealment or easier application of firepower. The regiment believed it could not have it both ways. Although camouflage suffered with the removal of vegetation and the building of bunkers, it was fairly clear that these same conditions allowed the troopers to call for mortar fire on enemy soldiers thirty yards from friendly positions.<sup>78</sup> On Arawe, the 112th defended on its own terms – behind constantly improved fortifications and ever-expanded fields of fire. Conditions months later during the battle along the Driniumor River were not to be so accommodating.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 1-31. See also, Samuel Eliot Morison, *History of United States Naval Operations in World War II*, vol. 6, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier, 22 July 1942-1 May 1944* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1950; reprint, 1988), 89-97; and Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 220-32. For a concise overview of the formulation of Allied Pacific strategy at the highest level, see Gerhard L. Weinberg, "Grand Strategy in the Pacific War," *Air Power History* 43 (Spring 1996): 4-13.

<sup>2</sup> Cunningham to Johnson, 2 November 1942, Dunlap Collection. For views of the rank and file, see Moody, "Training of the 112th," *ibid.*; and Kelley interview, author's collection.

<sup>3</sup> Grant interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>4</sup> HQ, Woodlark Task Force, "Historical Report of Task Force," 20 August 1943, 2, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 1-13 May 1943, RG 407, NA; Troop B, 251st Quartermaster Remount Squadron, "Movement of Public Animals," 17 September 1944, Dunlap Collection; McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 9, *ibid.*; Malcolm N. Moody to David O. Hale, 27 June 1992, *ibid.*; Moody, "Training of the 112th," *ibid.*; Hooper tape recording, October 2001, *ibid.*; Kelley interview, author's collection.

<sup>5</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Field Order No. 1, 22 July 1943, Field Orders, CAVR-112-3.9, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. See also, Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982; Chubbuck interview; and Miller interview; all in Dunlap Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Historical Report," 2, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 17 May-13 June 1943, RG 407, NA; Grant interview, Dunlap Collection. With only slight exaggeration, one trooper summarized the Townsville experience by writing, "For one month, we did little more than march our legs off each day" (McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 9, *ibid.*).

<sup>7</sup> U.S. War Department, *Table of Organization, No. 2-11, Cavalry Regiment, Horse* (Washington, D.C., 1942), Dunlap Collection; Woodlark Task Force, "Historical Report," 2, *ibid.*; "Regimental Diary," 17 May-13 June 1943, RG 407, NA; Reeves R. Houghton to John B. Dunlap, Jr., 26 October 1993, Dunlap Collection; Malcolm N. Moody to Edward J. Drea, 18 June 1985, Private Collection of Edward J. Drea, Fairfax, VA; Moody, "Training of the 112th," Dunlap Collection. Although the "Historical Report" mentions that the 112th drew only three 60-mm mortars at New Caledonia, Houghton recalled having twelve in the regiment on Woodlark. These additional weapons may have been issued at some point during the unit's five-month stay on the island – or at Townsville, for that matter. On Woodlark and throughout the major fighting on Arawe, the 112th decided to man only six 60-mm mortars since senior leaders at the time preferred not to strip riflemen from the line troops (Houghton, "Recollections," 160, *ibid.*).

<sup>8</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of Operations, CHRONICLE, 22 June-5 August 1943," 5, 106-0.3, Box 2399, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; "Regimental Diary," 17 May-13 June 1943, *ibid.*; Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 50; Hooper tape recording, October 2001, Dunlap Collection; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 54-55.

In spite of the plan to familiarize the regiment with amphibious craft, many troopers apparently missed this opportunity. One enlisted man from Troop B recalled that his unit boarded an LCI (Landing Craft, Infantry) for the first time on the day it sailed for Woodlark. Malcolm N. Moody, letter to author, 6 February 2002, author's collection.

<sup>9</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Historical Report," 4-5, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 13-30 June 1943, RG 407, NA; Moody, "Training of the 112th," Dunlap Collection.

<sup>10</sup> Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 57.

<sup>11</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Reconnaissance of Kiriwina and Woodlark," 24 May 1943, History, 148th Field Artillery Battalion, FABN-148-0.1, Box 19807, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Sixth Army, "Report of Operations, CHRONICLE," 7, *ibid.*; Woodlark Task Force, "Historical Report," 6, Dunlap Collection; HQ, Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary, 23 June to 4 August 1943," 1, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 54-56. See also, Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 233.

For Krueger's intentions, see David Dexter, *Australia in the War of 1939-1945*, vol. 6, *The New Guinea Offensives* (Canberra: Australian War Memorial, 1961), 222-23. Troopers of all ranks expected the advanced party to meet Japanese resistance. See Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982; McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 11-12; Chubbuck interview; McMains interview; and Miller interview; all in Dunlap Collection.

McMains finished the war as the commander of 2d Squadron. Though some of the 112th's senior leaders remained on active duty for several years after the war, only McMains commanded combat troops in a subsequent conflict. He saw action in Korea at the head of 3d Battalion, 9th Infantry Regiment, a black unit that fought on the Pusan Perimeter and up and down the peninsula. The men and their commander earn high praise in Clay Blair, *The Forgotten War: America in Korea, 1950-1953* (New York: Times Books, 1987; reprint, New York: Anchor Books, 1989), 203, 240, 260-62, 283, 478-81, 612-13.

<sup>12</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Lessons Learned on Recent Amphibious Operations," 3 November 1943, Lessons Learned, 112th Cavalry, 1943-44, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Sixth Army, "Report of Operations, CHRONICLE," 8, *ibid.*; Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary," 3-15, Dunlap Collection; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 56-57.

<sup>13</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Historical Report," 2-5, Dunlap Collection; Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary," 8, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 53n.

<sup>14</sup> Malcolm N. Moody to Frank Gish, 31 July 1997, Dunlap Collection; Miller interview, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 277.

<sup>15</sup> Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.* "Biographical Summary of Colonel Alexander Macomb Miller, III," Dunlap Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection; Miller interview, *ibid.* As in the case of Cunningham and General Cummings, one might indulge in the similarities between Miller and Colonel Newton of Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*: "The Regimental Commander of the 460th . . . was a painfully shy man with excellent manners, a West Pointer. Rumor claimed he had never had a woman in his life. . . . The Colonel was beneath his manners an extremely fussy man who nagged his officers in a mild voice, and was reputed never to have had a thought which was not granted him first by the General." Mailer, *Naked and the Dead*, 70.

<sup>18</sup> Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection; Miller interview, *ibid.*

<sup>19</sup> McMains interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>20</sup> Miller interview, Dunlap Collection. Hooper interview, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Historical Report," 6, Dunlap Collection; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 50, 58.

<sup>22</sup> Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, "History of Medical Activities, 3d Quarter," 7 October 1943, Quarterly Medical Reports, CAVR-112-MD-0.2, Box 18094, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, "Quarterly Report of Medical History (July 1-Sept. 30, 1943)," Quarterly Medical Reports, CAVR-112-MD-0.2, Box 18094, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 24, 27-28, 31 July, 3, 6, 27 August, 7, 9, and 28 September 1943, Dunlap Collection; McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 12, *ibid.*; Kelley interview, author's collection.

<sup>23</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary," 3-15, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 1 July-22 November 1943, RG 407, NA; 112th Cavalry, Field Order No. 1, 22 July 1943, *ibid.*; Houghton to Dunlap, 26 October 1993, Dunlap Collection; Houghton, "Recollections," 260, *ibid.* The regiment had twelve 60-mm mortars but only manned six (see note 7 above).

<sup>24</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary," 2-14, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 1 July-22 November 1943, RG 407, NA; Moody, "Training of the 112th," Dunlap Collection; Nance and Giles interview, author's collection.

<sup>25</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary," 1-15, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 1 July-12 November 1943, RG 407, NA; 112th Cavalry, Field Order No. 1, 22 July 1943, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, "Jungle Rations," 1 October 1943, Lessons Learned, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 31 July 1943, Dunlap Collection.

For an overview of artillery liaison planes and the variety of ways that they supported U.S. ground forces in SWPA, see Edgar F. Raines, Jr., *Eyes of Artillery: The Origins of Modern U.S. Army Aviation in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 2000), 241-45, 252-66.

<sup>26</sup> Sixth Army, "Report of Operations, CHRONICLE," 11, RG 407, NA; Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary," 2, 11-15, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 27 July-27 October 1943, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 27 July-3 August 1943, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>27</sup> "Regimental Diary," 20 September-21 November 1943, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 20 September, 6, 22 October 1943, Dunlap Collection; Moody, "Training of the 112th," *ibid.* As an exception, the description of one attack problem – on 13 November 1943 – provides slightly more detail. Soldiers were alerted at 0515 and ordered to occupy the OPLR at 0630. The exercise ended at 1140 and was followed by critiques at the task force and regimental level. "Regimental Diary," 13 November 1943, RG 407, NA.

<sup>28</sup> Woodlark Task Force, "Operations Diary," 8-10, 12-13, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 21 July-19 November 1943, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 19-21 July, 18 September 1943, Dunlap Collection; Moody, "Training of the 112th," *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> 112th Cavalry, "History of Medical Activities," 7 October 1943, RG 407, NA; Grant interview, Dunlap Collection. See also, Bergerud, *Touched With Fire*, 90-97.

<sup>30</sup> 112th Cavalry, "Jungle Rations," 1 October 1943, RG 407, NA.

<sup>31</sup> Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 97-101; George C. Kenney, *General Kenney Reports: A Personal History of the Pacific War* (New York: Duell, Sloan, and Pearce, 1949; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Office of Air Force History, United States Air Force, 1987), 326-27; Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon: The Story of Sixth Army in World War II* (Washington, D.C.: Combat Forces Press, 1953), 28; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 67-277.



<sup>32</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, "Transmittal of Historical Report," 10 February 1944, 1, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427 [hereafter "Historical Report (Arawe)"], RG 407, NA; "Regimental Diary," 24 November-2 December 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>33</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum (no subject), 8 December 1943, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 16, *ibid.*; "Regimental Diary," 5-12 December 1943, *ibid.*; Malcolm N. Moody, "T/O & E's," n.d., Dunlap Collection; Moody, "Training of the 112th," *ibid.*; Moody, letter to author, 6 February 2002, author's collection.

It is unclear how many bazookas and flame throwers were issued to the 112th and where they were assigned within the organization. A memorandum outlining the ammunition loads for each weapon system in the assaulting units of the task force mentions three flame throwers, each assigned to the Pioneer and Demolitions Platoon of Service Troop (this same document says nothing of bazookas or rocket launchers). In contrast, Malcolm Moody, an enlisted man who participated in the seizure of Pilelo Island during the Arawe landings, insisted that the stable crew from his troop (Troop B) was issued a flame thrower and a bazooka, both of which were used on Pilelo Island. See Enclosure 4 (List of Equipment and Clothing), 3, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Moody to Drea, 18 June 1985, Private Collection of Edward J. Drea; Moody, "T/O & E's," Dunlap Collection. For an account dealing with the introduction of flame throwers in the Southwest Pacific, see Brooks E. Kleber and Dale Birdsell, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services: The Chemical Warfare Service: Chemicals in Combat* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1966), 543-553.

<sup>34</sup> HQ, U.S. Forces, APO 323, Training Memorandum No. 1, 6 December 1943, Director Task Force, Training Schedules and Instructions, 98-TF4-3.13, Box 1533, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; HQ, U.S. Forces, APO 323, "Rehearsal Amphibious Landing," 7 December 1943, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 101-2; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 284. For diagrams and descriptions of the numerous amphibious craft employed by American forces in SWPA, see Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 19-20, 359-63.

<sup>35</sup> HQ, Alamo Force, "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 17 May 1944, 7-8, 18, Dunlap Collection; HQ, U.S. Forces, APO 323, Field Order No. 1, n.d., Director Task Force, Field Order No. 1 and Supporting Papers, 98-TF4-3.9, Box 1533, Entry 427, RG 407, NA (for map distribution, see Annex 7 (Engineer) to Field Order No. 1); "Historical Report (Arawe)," 2, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Enclosure 3 (Landing Craft Assignments), Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Landing Plans, CAVR-112-4.8, Box 18094, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 3-6 December 1943, Dunlap Collection; Chubbuck interview, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 277.

<sup>36</sup> Operations Map of Cape Merkus, New Britain, 15 December 1943, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 283-84.

<sup>37</sup> Alamo Force, "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 4, 6, Dunlap Collection; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 2-3, RG 407, NA; Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 101-2. Controversy surrounds the decision to use LCRs. In *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, Barbey assigns responsibility for the decision to Cunningham, declaring that the troop commander opted for the surprise rubber boat landings against the advice of the admiral and others (p. 101). However, there is some doubt as to how much of the plan Sixth Army dictated and how much choice Cunningham had in the matter. Philip Hooper, the general's chief planner for the operation, states that Krueger's staff developed the idea for the two subsidiary landings. Hooper is probably correct. There was an acute shortage of ship-to-shore transport for the DEXTERITY operation. This was made more difficult by the reefs around Arawe, which impeded all but the tracked LVT from carrying out a smooth assault. Krueger had to temporarily annex thirty-nine LVTs (one amphibious tractor company) from the 1st Marine Division, but this amount was still not enough to transport the whole task force (Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 283-84). Though Sixth Army may have been able to rearrange its available craft to meet Cunningham's tactical desires, it seems more

likely that Krueger's staff decided on a plan that may have been more convenient from a logistical standpoint. See Frank O. Hough and John A. Crown, *The Campaign on New Britain* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1952), 16n, where the authors quote a letter from the Office of the Chief of Military History: "Sixth Army Headquarters had a tendency to specify schemes of maneuver for its subordinate units, a departure from established Army practice." Also see D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, vol. 2, 1941-1945 (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1975), 342-43, where the author describes the 1st Marine Division's objections to the "originally defective plan for the Gloucester landing, *developed by Krueger's staff* [italics added]."

<sup>38</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 5-6, RG 407, NA; Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 102-4; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 284-85.

<sup>39</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 6-9, RG 407, NA; Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*; 104-6; Malcolm N. Moody, "Pilelo Island and Addenda," n.d., Dunlap Collection; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 284-85; Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier*, 373-76. In describing the LCRs as having outboard motors, Morison stands alone and in contrast with participants' accounts. Debarkation times are approximate as they vary depending on source. What is clear is that all elements were moving simultaneously. This was not a silent operation.

<sup>40</sup> HQ, U.S. Forces, APO 323, S-2-3 Journal [hereafter Director Task Force S-2-3 Journal], 15 December 1943, Dunlap Collection; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 8, RG 407, NA; Barbey, *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, 106; Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection. In *MacArthur's Amphibious Navy*, Barbey states, "The APD [*Sands*] and her supporting destroyer [*Shaw*] withheld their fire for a few dangerous minutes" (p. 106). Sixth Army's official report notes a ten-minute lag time (Alamo Force, "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 8, Dunlap Collection).

<sup>41</sup> Moody, "Pilelo Island and Addenda," Dunlap Collection.

<sup>42</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 9, RG 407, NA.

<sup>43</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 13, RG 407, NA; 112th Cavalry, Enclosure 3 (Landing Craft Assignments), Historical Report, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 284-86; Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier*, 375-76. Sixth Army and Seventh Amphibious Force used rocket-launching DUKWs for the first time at Arawe.

<sup>44</sup> Kenney, *General Kenney Reports*, 330.

<sup>45</sup> Alamo Force, "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 8, Dunlap Collection; HQ, Director Task Force, S-2 Periodic Reports, 15 December 1943, 98-TF4-2.1, Box 1533, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 6, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 286.

<sup>46</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 6-7, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Enclosure 1 ("Outline of Instructions for Landing Operations and Movement to Final Objective," 10 December 1943), 1-4, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Director Task Force S-2-3 Journal, 15 December 1943, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>47</sup> HQ, Alamo Force, Enclosure No. 1 ("Lessons Learned"), "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 17 May 1944, 3, Dunlap Collection; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 7-8, RG 407, NA; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 286-87.

<sup>48</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 6, RG 407, NA; “Regimental Diary,” 15 December 1943, *ibid.*; Hooper interview, Dunlap Collection; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 286-87; Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier*, 376.

<sup>49</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 7-8, RG 407, NA; “Regimental Diary,” 15 December 1943, *ibid.*; 112th Cavalry, “Outline of Instructions for Landing Operations and Movement to Final Objective,” 10 December 1943, 2-3, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, S-1 Journal, 4, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427 [hereafter S-1 Journal (Arawe)], *ibid.*; HQ, 148th Field Artillery, “Unit Journal, 29 November 1943 to 26 January 1944,” FABN-148-0.3, Box 19808, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 287.

<sup>50</sup> Alamo Force, “Report on the DEXTERITY Operation,” 18, Dunlap Collection; “Historical Report (Arawe),” 8, 10-11, RG 407, NA; “Regimental Diary,” 16-24 December 1943, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 16-22 December 1943, Dunlap Collection; Karl C. Dod, *United States Army in World War II: The Technical Services: The Corps of Engineers: The War Against Japan* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1966), 273.

<sup>51</sup> Director Task Force S-2-3 Journal, 18-21 December 1943, 30-31 January 1944, Dunlap Collection (quote from 18 December entry). HQ, Alamo Force, Enclosure No. 1 (“Lessons Learned”), “Report on the DEXTERITY Operation,” 7, Dunlap Collection; “Regimental Diary,” 16 December 1943-9 January 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th Cavalry, “Enemy Air Raids During Period from 15 December 1943 to 10 February 1944,” S-3 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 19-24 December 1943, Dunlap Collection; Kenney, *General Kenney Reports*, 331-32; Morison, *Breaking the Bismarcks Barrier*, 376-77.

<sup>52</sup> 112th Cavalry, “Enemy Air Raids,” RG 407, NA. Ironically, one of these last few attacks caused the most casualties when, on 1 February 1944, a single plane dropped one bomb that killed three and wounded four from Weapons Troop. S-1 Journal (Arawe), 13-14, RG 407, NA.

<sup>53</sup> Diary translation in HQ, Director Task Force, Preliminary Examination of Captured Documents, 21 February 1944, 98-TF4-2.9, Box 1533, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. HQ, U.S. Forces, APO 333, “Translation of Diary of Major Komori, 16 October 1943 to 30 March 1944,” G-2 Memorandum and Papers, 112th Cavalry, 1943-1945, CAVR-112-2.18, Box 18092, Entry 427 [hereafter “Komori Diary Translation”], *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, S-4 Journal, 23, CAVR-112-4.2, Box 18082, Entry 427 [hereafter S-4 Journal (Arawe)], *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 280, 287-88; Bernard C. Nalty, *Cape Gloucester: The Green Inferno* (Washington, D.C.: Marine Corps Historical Center, 1994), 5; U.S. War Department, *Handbook on Japanese Military Forces* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1944; reprint, with an introduction by David C. Isby and an afterword by Jeffrey L. Ethell, Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1991), 32-36.

For an examination of the nature of the Japanese soldier in World War II, see Meirion Harries and Susie Harries, *Soldiers of the Sun: The Rise and Fall of the Imperial Japanese Army* (New York: Random House, 1991), 303-484; and Robert B. Edgerton, *Warriors of the Rising Sun: A History of the Japanese Military* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1997), 252-324. For an overview of the World War II Japanese conscript’s basic training, see Edward J. Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor: Essays on the Imperial Japanese Army* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998), 75-90. For a comparative overview of Japanese and American ground combat doctrine in World War II, see Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor*, 60-74.

<sup>54</sup> “Komori Diary Translation,” RG 407, NA.

<sup>55</sup> HQ, U.S. Forces, "Report on Patrol to CORNFIELD," 23 December 1943, Director Task Force, S-2 Periodic Reports, 98-TF4-2.1, Box 1533, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; "Regimental Diary," 20 December 1943, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 21 December 1943, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>56</sup> "Regimental Diary," 25 December 1943, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Operations Diary, 25 December 1943, S-3 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 288.

<sup>57</sup> "Komori Diary Translation," RG 407, NA. Director Task Force, S-2 Periodic Reports, 26 December 1943, *ibid.*; "Regimental Diary," 25-26 December 1943, *ibid.*

<sup>58</sup> Director Task Force, S-2 Periodic Reports, 26 December 1943, 3-15 January 1944, RG 407, NA; "Regimental Diary," 26 December 1943-15 January 1944, *ibid.*; 112th Cavalry, Operations Diary, 26 December 1943-15 January 1944, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, S-2 Annex, 26 December 1943-11 January 1944, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.* Official reports of Troop B's 1 January attack did not specifically state whether mortars or howitzers fired the errant rounds, but, according to troopers on the scene and subsequent investigation, the gun crews of the 148th Field Artillery were the culprits. See Houghton, "Recollections," 381-82, Dunlap Collection; and Moody, letter to author, 6 February 2002, author's collection. For a poignant description of Troop G's 4 January attack, see McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 21-23.

<sup>59</sup> Cunningham expressed his frustration to Krueger in a 6 January report, where he described the Japanese defenses: "This is not an organized position in the accepted sense of the word, it consists apparently of shallow trenches and deep fox holes. . . . Officers and men . . . report that they have not seen a single Japanese and that they are unable to locate machine guns firing on them from a distance of 10 to 20 yards" (Hough and Crown, *Campaign on New Britain*, 147). It was believed that enemy infantrymen moved from position to position in order to confuse attackers. See Henry I. Shaw, Jr. and Douglas T. Kane, *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II*, vol. 2, *Isolation of Rabaul* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1963), 392.

<sup>60</sup> "Regimental Diary," 1-16 January 1944, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 17, *ibid.*; HQ, 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, Field Order No. 1, 14 January 1944, Historical Report, INRG-158-BN(2)-0.3, Box 21214, Entry 427, *ibid.*

<sup>61</sup> Philip L. Hooper, telephone conversation with author, 28 January 2002, author's collection.

<sup>62</sup> The 6 January attack called for an envelopment of the enemy's right flank. The length of the Japanese line was not known. Intelligence officers estimated enemy strength in the position to be anywhere from 50 to 150 soldiers – a wide margin for an assault carried out by roughly 350 men. HQ, 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, Historical Report, 9 December 1943-22 February 1944, INRG-158-BN(2)-0.3, Entry 427, Box 21214, RG 407, NA.

<sup>63</sup> Director Task Force, Preliminary Examination of Captured Documents, 21 February 1944, RG 407, NA. "Komori Diary Translation," RG 407, NA.

<sup>64</sup> 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, Historical Report, 9 December 1943-22 February 1944, RG 407, NA; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 288-89. For a negative assessment of Cunningham's leadership, see Arthur, *Bushmasters*, 55-56, 220. In this popular history of the 158th Infantry Regiment, Arthur accurately depicts Cunningham's demeanor but offers no evidence – other than baseless accusations of frustrated battalion commanders – to support the case for his incompetence.

<sup>65</sup> Director Task Force S-2-3 Journal, 16 January 1944, Dunlap Collection; Director Task Force, S-2 Periodic Reports, 16-17 January 1944, RG 407, NA; 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, Field Order No. 1, 14 January 1944, *ibid.*; 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, Journal, Historical Report, 9 December 1943-22 February 1944, INRG-158-BN(2)-0.3, Box 21214, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Holzimmer, "A Soldier's Soldier," 309-10.

<sup>66</sup> "Komori Diary Translation," RG 407, NA.

<sup>67</sup> *Ibid.*; "Regimental Diary," 17 January-3 June 1944, RG 407, NA; D. M. McMains, "Jungle Patrol," n.d., Dunlap Collection; Nalty, *Cape Gloucester*, 19.

<sup>68</sup> Alamo Force, "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 16-17, Dunlap Collection; S-1 Journal (Arawe), 16, RG 407, NA. The casualties for Director Task Force (including 2d Battalion, 158th Infantry, the 148th Field Artillery Battalion, and other units) totaled 118 killed, 352 wounded, and 4 missing. These figures and those above only include casualties incurred through 10 February 1944. On that date, Sixth Army officially ended Operation DEXTERITY.

<sup>69</sup> "Regimental Diary," 1 March-3 June 1944, RG 407, NA; S-1 Journal (Arawe), 12-13, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 3 March, 8, 11, 14 April 1944, Dunlap Collection; McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 24, *ibid.*; William E. Beggs, "Recollections," 1983, *ibid.*; Kelley interview, author's collection.

<sup>70</sup> "Regimental Diary," 15-28 December 1943, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 10, *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> Alamo Force, Enclosure No. 1 ("Lessons Learned"), "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 4, Dunlap Collection. "Regimental Diary," 29 December 1943, RG 407, NA; Moody, "Training of the 112th," Dunlap Collection; McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 18, *ibid.*; Hooper interview, *ibid.*; Nance and Giles interview, author's collection.

<sup>72</sup> HQ, Director Task Force, Daily S-4 Supply Reports, 17 January 1944, 98-TF4-4.1, Box 1533, Entry 427; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 12, 19; "Regimental Diary," 7 January 1944; 112th Cavalry, Operations Diary, 18 January-9 February 1944, S-3 Annex, Historical Report; S-4 Journal (Arawe), 14-43; HQ, 112th Cavalry, S-4 Periodic Reports, 16-17 February 1944, CAVR-112-4.1, Box 18094, Entry 427; HQ, 112th Cavalry, "Operations Sketch of Defensive Positions," S-3 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427; all in RG 407, NA.

<sup>73</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, "Standard Operation for Outpost Line of Resistance," 23 January 1944, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>74</sup> Alamo Force, Enclosure No. 1 ("Lessons Learned"), "Report on the DEXTERITY Operation," 7, Dunlap Collection; HQ, Director Task Force, S-3 Operations Reports, 7, 9, 17 January 1944, 98-TF4-3.1, Box 1533, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; 112th Cavalry, "Operations Sketch of Defensive Positions," *ibid.*; 112th Cavalry, "Standard Operation for Outpost Line of Resistance," *ibid.*; Houghton, "Recollections," 363c, 383, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>75</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 10, 15-16, RG 407, NA; 112th Cavalry, "Standard Operation for Outpost Line of Resistance," *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Bulletin No. 9, 26 January 1944, S-1 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Judson Chubbuck, Booby Bomb Diagram, Training Exercises and Demonstrations, Dunlap Collection. The last source listed is one sketch from a collection of informal training outlines that Chubbuck developed while serving as Cunningham's aide.

<sup>76</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 16-17, 19, RG 407, NA (quote on p. 19). “Regimental Diary,” 28 December 1943, *ibid.*; Houghton, “Recollections,” 387-91, Dunlap Collection; William Garbo, telephone conversation with author, 1 January 2002, author’s collection. Garbo transferred from a support unit and joined the 112th during the battle on the Driniumor River in July 1944. He remembered well the advice given to him by experienced troopers not to fire his weapon unless he had a target.

<sup>77</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 19, RG 407, NA.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 17. See also, Frank C. Fyke, “Memoirs of Army Training and Combat in World War II,” 1995, 15, Dunlap Collection. The argument regarding laziness should not be overstated. There were instances when the troopers of the 112th demonstrated their laziness and were justifiably criticized for doing so. See HQ, 112th Cavalry, Bulletin No. 9, 26 January 1944, S-1 Annex, Historical Report, RG 407, NA. This document reproves the unit for discarding trash and leftover food around dugouts and foxholes and for erecting lean-to shelters in the OPLR area – “this destroys all attempts at camouflage.”

## **CHAPTER IV**

### **INTO THE JUNGLE OF FIRE**

While the 112th Cavalry mopped-up around Arawe, the forces of General MacArthur and Admiral Halsey carried out the last stages in the reduction of Rabaul. Landings at Cape Gloucester and Saidor, New Guinea, in late December 1943 and early January 1944 paved the way for SWPA's bold strike against the Admiralty Islands on 29 February. This invasion, combined with Halsey's seizure of the Green Islands and Emirau, completed the encirclement of the Japanese base, essentially isolating the one hundred thousand enemy soldiers stationed there. Located four hundred miles northwest of Rabaul, the Admiralties would also shield the right flank of any Allied advance up the New Guinea coast. In the meantime, air combat and repeated raids against the major centers of Japanese air power in the region had virtually driven the enemy from the skies. The stage was set for MacArthur to begin his full-throttled approach to the Philippines.

As the next objective, the SWPA chief fixed his eyes on Hollandia, an old trading post midway between Milne Bay and the Vogelkop Peninsula. From the outset, the contemplated move was a risky operation, as the target lay nearly five hundred miles from the closest Allied bases. However, MacArthur and his most senior commanders had restricted access to decrypted Japanese radio traffic, and this special intelligence (known as Ultra) reduced some of the anxiety because it revealed that the target of the great leap was lightly defended. With adequate harbors and pre-existing airfields, Hollandia also had tremendous potential as a supply and staging base and as a new home for General George Kenney's bombers. Although MacArthur's proposed assault would bypass the enemy concentrations at Wewak and Hansa Bay, Allied land-based fighters were not within range to adequately support the operation. For this reason, when the

Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS) approved the Hollandia plan in March, they ordered carriers under Admiral Nimitz to assist SWPA. However, naval aircraft would only be on station for three days after the landings before returning to the Central Pacific. Rather than deny U.S. ground forces air cover while engineers improved the landing strips at Hollandia, MacArthur's staff arranged for a separate task force to simultaneously seize Aitape, where – 125 miles to the east – the Japanese possessed an airdrome that was nearly operational. Preceded by powerful Allied air strikes and a thorough deception effort, the landings on 22 April found the enemy confused and unprepared. Once ashore, soldiers from Sixth Army met only scattered resistance. Although the Americans at Hollandia had a more difficult time, the task force at Aitape quickly took control of the nearby Tadjji Drome. In two days, it was ready for Allied planes. MacArthur, elated at the success of what one historian has called his “finest hour in World War II,” was already looking westward.<sup>1</sup>

In storming up the New Guinea coast and on to the Philippines, the SWPA chief was opposed by the Japanese Eighteenth Army commander, Lieutenant General Adachi Hatazo. The Hollandia operation found Adachi's three infantry divisions waiting in the Madang-Hansa Bay-Wewak area for an Allied attack that never came. Already cut off from the Japanese defending western New Guinea, the Eighteenth Army sank in terms of strategic usefulness when U.S. strikes following rapidly on the heels of Hollandia-Aitape penetrated Geelvink Bay, the body of water just east of the Vogelkop Peninsula. Like the isolated occupants of Rabaul, Adachi's army soon was written off as an inevitable loss and ordered to remain at Hansa Bay and hold out as long as possible against the Australians advancing overland from the east. Supplies on hand, though, would last only until September. If compelled to subject his army to combat, starvation, and disease, Adachi reasoned that the lives of his soldiers would be better spent taking the fight to the enemy, and there was no better target within striking distance than the recently occupied



Tadji Drome. Thus, in May, the general dispatched the 20th and 41st Infantry Divisions, as well as part of the 51st Division – about twenty thousand men in all – on a slow, desperate trek through nearly one hundred miles of jungle. Admitting he could not “find any means nor [*sic*] method which will solve this situation strategically or technically,” Adachi hoped “to overcome by relying on our Japanese Bushido.”<sup>2</sup> His units had little else in their favor. Bloodied, malnourished, poorly supplied, and without adequate motor transport, artillery, or air support, they pushed toward the objective.

Even in their weakened condition, Adachi’s divisions could wreak havoc in SWPA’s rear, and Lieutenant General Walter Krueger realized this. The day after the landing at Aitape, the Sixth Army commander reinforced the area with a regimental combat team (RCT) from the 32d Infantry Division. He sent the remainder of the division there in early May, placing its own Major General William H. Gill in charge of the airdrome’s defense. Gill’s command, called Persecution Task Force (PTF), continued to fortify the Tadji perimeter and established outposts to help detect any Japanese thrust from the east. Skirmishing in May and early June concerned the 32d’s commander, especially when a five hundred-man attack on 4 June forced the emergency evacuation of one of his coastal positions. Spooked, PTF pulled the rest of its forward elements back to a new outpost line on the Driniumor River, roughly fifteen miles east of Tadji Drome. Reports of Japanese patrol activity in mid-June, along with intelligence derived from foreboding Ultra intercepts, convinced Krueger that decisive action was necessary to eliminate any danger Adachi’s Eighteenth Army posed to Aitape.

Not only did the Sixth Army commander express a practical concern regarding the continued security of the airdrome, he was also keenly aware of the potential blow such a threat – if allowed to persist – could deliver upon his boss’s cherished goal of returning to the Philippines. As PTF braced for Adachi’s attack in mid-June, Krueger’s forces were engaged in

bitterly contested battles hundreds of miles up the New Guinea coast at Wakde-Sarmi and Biak – all of this while planners from SWPA and Sixth Army hammered out the details for future assaults across Geelvink Bay to the Vogelkop Peninsula and beyond. In his bid for an SWPA-led invasion of the Philippines, MacArthur would lose credibility if the Japanese Eighteenth Army continued to run amok across his lines of communication. For this reason, there was intense pressure on the field commanders concerned not only to protect the airdrome but also to quickly find and destroy Adachi's divisions.

To this end, Krueger bolstered the Aitape task force and laid the groundwork for what he envisioned to be a “vigorous counteroffensive.”<sup>3</sup> He ordered or accelerated the movement of additional artillery, planes, and men to Tadjil Drome and dispatched Major General Charles P. Hall and his XI Corps Headquarters to assume command of the expanding PTF. Though now subordinate to Hall, General Gill still remained in charge of the eastern approaches to Aitape. He assigned the 32d's assistant division commander, Brigadier General Clarence A. Martin, to oversee covering force operations along the Driniumor River line. Martin's command would be the one to launch the crushing attack against the Eighteenth Army once it was found. These organizational changes went into effect on 28 June, shortly after Hall's arrival.<sup>4</sup> The same day, troopers of the 112th Cavalry debarked at Aitape and received their marching orders.

In six months of combat and occupation duty on Arawe, the 112th had evolved from a cohesive yet unseasoned unit into a battle-tested regiment. Though not particularly desperate or intense, the fighting around Cape Merkus was enough to push some cavalymen past their point of endurance. Between December 1943 and May 1944, the 112th's medical detachment treated ninety-two soldiers for mental exhaustion and evacuated at least forty of these cases from the peninsula.<sup>5</sup> These figures lend some credence to one trooper's assertion that the Arawe experience helped rid the regiment of those unfit for battle. Referring to some of these men,

selectee Lionel Carter wrote, “In the first combat action, they ‘lost their minds,’ ran away from combat – even non-coms who left their squads, shot themselves purposely or accidentally, hid down in their foxholes during early morning attacks against the Japanese. It took combat in New Britain to ‘weed out’ these people.”<sup>6</sup>

Carter’s reference to unintentional shootings was also not without foundation. From 15 December to 30 January – a forty-seven day period – twenty-one men in the regiment were “wounded accidentally” – that is, not in action. At least thirteen of these incidents involved self-inflicted (though not necessarily deliberate) gunshot wounds. Presumably, the remainder occurred when soldiers discharged their weapons by mistake, injuring others.<sup>7</sup> The anxiety of “first combat” partially explains these astounding statistics. Another plausible explanation may be the 112th’s utter lack of live firing while stationed for five months on Woodlark and its inadequate, hurried train-up on Goodenough Island. Although skilled in the care of their weapons and how they functioned, troopers – so it seemed – were simply not used to handling loaded firearms.

After the task force had broken the back of Japanese resistance on Arawe, the 112th conducted training that reflected an appreciation for weapons proficiency and jungle combat. From mid-March to mid-April, qualification ranges for the M-1, BAR, and Thompson SMG dominated the training schedule. Live firing of light and heavy machine guns and mortars also occurred frequently, as did other tasks leaders now understood to be especially relevant – like grenade throwing, first aid, and land navigation. Statistics on Thompson SMG familiarization were particularly scrutinized, as the regimental diary’s 21 March entry indicated: “Men from Service and Headquarters troops armed with submachine guns fired today who failed to qualify or were not present at previous firing.”<sup>8</sup> This revealed the 112th’s newfound respect for the Tommy gun. The historical report described it as “an ideal weapon for jungle warfare. . . . In

quick encounters with the enemy at short range, an alert submachine gunner can inflict heavy casualties before the enemy can open up with any substantial volume of fire.” The report went on to add that “submachine gun training has been emphasized and personnel have been taught to fire from all positions, including firing from [the] carrying position or hip firing.”<sup>9</sup> The BAR, though more burdensome, was also found to be useful in bolstering the rifle squad’s firepower. In addition, the regiment’s experience showed them the limitations of their machine guns in the jungle. These weapons proved too difficult to carry through the dense vegetation, and, upon meeting the enemy, crews could not employ them quickly enough. Finding them impractical in initial attacks, leaders thereafter reserved their machine guns for perimeter defense. Learned in battle, these lessons were sustained in training, as well as on patrols that searched for and sometimes encountered small groups of Japanese as late as 3 June.<sup>10</sup>

From a personnel standpoint, the 112th had suffered some setbacks from fighting on Arawe but, on balance, it was relatively well-off. The regiment lost up to 20 percent of its men to combat, injury, and disease, but many of these casualties were made good months before the outfit left New Britain. The bulk of the unit’s replacements arrived in mid-January. Through training, patrolling, and outpost duty from February to June, these new soldiers became acquainted with the jungle, as well as with the veterans who had fought in it. The integration of replacements occurred after the last major engagement and, thus, at a point when combat losses dramatically decreased. Moreover, field sanitation – though poor at the outset – improved over time, and the enemy’s withdrawal from the peninsula led to a change in living conditions, lessening the likelihood of personnel loss through disease. While squads and platoons were restored, stability at the senior levels of leadership remained a strength of the regiment. With the exception of ten second lieutenant replacements, no officers joined from outside the organization. By choice or compulsion, the 112th promoted its own to positions of greater

responsibility, granting five men battlefield commissions and filling troop commander vacancies with promising lieutenants. At the time it departed Arawe on 8 June, the regiment had spent almost two years overseas. Lieutenant Colonel Philip Hooper declared, "If just one reason for the effectiveness of the 112th could be identified it would be that these 1500 officers and men knew each other. Not only had they been together many months, but the mail censor requirement caused officers to know every family situation." Indeed, General Cunningham's executive officer believed this ever-increasing sense of "togetherness" to be critical as the unit left to meet their fate in the jungles east of Aitape.<sup>11</sup>

The regiment boarded transports at Cape Merkus and sailed for the SWPA staging area at Finschhafen, New Guinea, with the last elements arriving there on 9 June. Troopers had hardly unpacked and established a decent bivouac site when Krueger called them forward to Tadjji Drome. On 26 June, the 112th embarked on LCIs (Landing Craft, Infantry) and steamed over calm seas five hundred miles up the coast to Aitape, arriving there two days later. Working late into the night, the regimental staff planned for the unit's upcoming mission as part of PTF's covering force.<sup>12</sup>

Mustering roughly 85 percent of its assigned strength at the start of the campaign, the 112th tried to make the most of the personnel it had. To coordinate logistical support, a small rear echelon remained at Aitape while everyone else went forward. In accordance with a directive from PTF, the regiment left behind its 81-mm mortars, 37-mm antitank guns, and rocket launchers. This enabled the unit to employ their crewmen as ammunition bearers, machine-gun carriers, and extra riflemen. Turning in their musical instruments for litters, 112th bandmen went into action with the medical detachment.<sup>13</sup>

These measures, however, were not enough to offset General Martin's problems as he attempted to piece together the elements of his covering force. A staff officer with the 32d

Infantry Division had incorrectly assumed that Colonel Alexander Miller's 112th was the size of a three thousand-man infantry regiment, when in fact, it numbered only fifteen hundred.

Reviewing their assigned frontage, Miller and Cunningham both probably shook their heads in disbelief – perhaps recalling an observation brought to light in the historical report from the Arawe operation: “The present Cavalry Table of Organization does not provide sufficient fire power for Cavalry acting as Infantry. . . . While there is considerable difference in the comparative size of Infantry and Cavalry organizations, combat missions and tasks are often assigned on an equal basis.”<sup>14</sup>

At 0700 on 29 June, the cavalrymen began their movement toward the Driniumor line. Riding on trucks ten miles along the coastal trail, they dismounted and crossed the Nigia River on an engineer ferry. Once on the opposite shore, the regiment headed south into the jungle for five miles to a small village, where it established a defensive perimeter for the night. Leaving a detachment of about eighty troopers from Service and Headquarters Troops, the 112th pushed on the next morning for seven miles and set up squadron perimeters – one on each bank of an unnamed river, known as River X.

This forced march was a harsh introduction to what the troopers would experience in the coming weeks. Made in the pouring rain, it took two days for the heavily laden soldiers to travel the twelve miles over trails slick with mud and traversed by hills and streams. Equipment shortages complicated the journey. About four hundred men were missing jungle packs – lost or too worn for use after months on Arawe. The regiment also lacked spare parts for its automatic weapons, especially the cartridge belts and magazine clips required to efficiently store and carry BAR rounds. Extra ammunition was transported in field bags. The 112th's S-4 watched fellow cavalrymen leave for the front, “some with packs, some with canvas field bags and others with no pack at all.”<sup>15</sup> Canvas jungle boots and lightweight socks deteriorated in the mud and

constant moisture. Adding items of personal comfort to their regular loads, men tired quickly and discarded essential equipment as they plodded forward. Moving into the jungle in the footsteps of his troopers, Cunningham boiled as he took in the sight. “It was a disgrace. The trail was just littered,” Lieutenant Judson Chubbuck recalled.<sup>16</sup> Combat on New Britain had not prepared the regiment for long treks through the jungle, and the march inland marked a low point in the 112th’s history. Nevertheless, the regiment’s official report declared proudly that there were no stragglers – save two men who fell ill. As historian Edward Drea observes, “In peacetime, this feat alone would have been considered an accomplishment; now it was merely a prelude to bitter days ahead.”<sup>17</sup>

The 2d Squadron closed on the Driniumor River the next morning, moving three more miles to Afua, a village six miles inland and the southern flank of the PTF covering force. There, the squadron tied in with the outfit to its north – 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry, a unit from the 32d Infantry Division that had been placed under Cunningham’s command for the operation. The regiment spent the following week in these positions on River X and the Driniumor, cutting trails, laying communications wire, clearing fields of fire, and digging in. Working through some initial difficulties, the unit established a drop zone, and flights from Aitape began their regular runs to reequip and rearm the cavalrymen. Since its direct support artillery battalion, the 148th, remained over fifteen miles away at Tadjji Drome, the 112th received a liaison party from the 120th Field Artillery – already in place with other howitzer units along the coast. With the help of these forward observers, the regiment established and adjusted pre-planned mortar and artillery targets in front of their positions. Patrols pushed out into the surrounding jungle as far as five miles to the Harech River, finding several fresh trails but no enemy until 6 July. On that date, a reconnaissance detachment was sent reeling back into the perimeter by a platoon of Japanese infantry dug in approximately one thousand yards east of Afua.<sup>18</sup>

By 8 July, it was fairly clear that the Japanese had established a counter-reconnaissance screen and were somewhere east of the Driniumor preparing to mount an attack. Ultra-derived intelligence not only illuminated the Eighteenth Army's order of battle but also shed light on the logistical problems Adachi was experiencing as he assembled his forces. Thus, neither Hall, Krueger, nor SWPA's G-2 expected the enemy commander to strike anytime soon. Ultra had its limits, however. As the Japanese approached the Driniumor, they relied less frequently on wireless communications. Without a steady flow of radio traffic, Ultra bore little operational fruit, as MacArthur's eavesdroppers could not intercept runners carrying written orders. So critical questions remained – where exactly were Adachi's divisions staging and when would they attack? Cool to the idea of relying on the Japanese themselves to provide the answers – especially at a time when forces committed to PTF were needed elsewhere in SWPA – the Sixth Army commander chose to take action. Hoping to disrupt the Eighteenth Army's attack before it materialized, Krueger ordered Hall to send a reconnaissance-in-force to find the Japanese so that the remainder of PTF could destroy them and thus bring an end to what had become a thorn in MacArthur's side (or rear, in this case).

The specifics of Ultra intelligence could not be shared at the tactical level, and, therefore, Gill and Martin doubted the wisdom of a course of action that would further weaken the already overstretched covering force. Contrary to the Ultra-influenced assessments of Krueger and Hall, they based their understanding of the situation on front line units' reports, which strongly pointed toward an imminent Japanese assault. In grudging compliance, Martin sent out a two-pronged reconnaissance-in-force, consisting of a battalion from the 128th Infantry to the north and 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry in the south. After these elements pushed out on the morning of 10 July, units shifted up and down the line, filling in the vacated sectors and thinning out the defenses even more. Nonetheless, two infantry battalions and one cavalry



squadron could be dispersed so far. To cover the five-mile front along the Driniumor, companies were given sectors that would normally be assigned to battalions. “With such great . . . frontages,” the PTF after-action report read, “it was realized that the line could be breached at any point by a determined attack in force.”<sup>19</sup> Moreover, General Martin had no reserves to shore up a breakthrough should one occur.

At midnight on 10 July, Adachi’s men attacked across the Driniumor on a narrow front. Forging about fifty yards of waist-deep but slow-moving water, elements of three regiments charged across the rocky riverbed toward the American defenses. Slowed by steep banks on the opposite shore and tripped up by unseen strands of barbed wire, the Japanese pressed forward in “screaming, maniacal waves,” as one account stated.<sup>20</sup> Company E of 2d Battalion, 128th Infantry bore the brunt of the assault, and, despite inflicting heavy losses through machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire, its soldiers could not repel the attackers. By 0300, the Japanese had opened a thirteen hundred yard gap and expanded this with renewed assaults at dawn, hoping to roll up the exposed flanks of the covering force before consolidating and moving on to Tadjji Drome.<sup>21</sup>

With Eighteenth Army’s penetration occurring roughly two miles north of their positions, the troopers of the 112th saw little action the night of 10-11 July and received only fragmented reports regarding the attack. Earlier in the day, 2d Squadron had set off east across the Driniumor on its reconnaissance-in-force. Advancing single-file and cutting its way through the bush, it came upon no Japanese but had a tough time marching over the jungled foothills of the Torrecelli Mountain Range. The 2d Squadron finally halted for the night after moving less than two miles. In charge of the column, Major D. M. McMains was glad that he stopped when he did. Around midnight, he heard what sounded like enemy artillery one thousand yards to his front, and, shortly afterward, automatic weapons fire exploded to the north. Having advanced

from River X at the same time McMains jumped forward, 1st Squadron – now dug in on the Driniumor – also heard the furious din of battle. Closer to the action, Lieutenant Colonel Edward Bloch, commanding the 3d Battalion, 127th Infantry (on 1st Squadron's left flank) observed intense fire and requested artillery support. Despite poor communications with 1st Squadron, Cunningham called for periodic artillery concentrations to be fired in its sector. Landing three hundred yards east of the Driniumor on possible enemy staging areas, these unobserved barrages hit nothing but unoccupied jungle. The anxious troopers awaited the Japanese onslaught, expecting it to come at any time.<sup>22</sup>

With units overrun, in disarray, or out of communication, senior leaders of PTF struggled to get a grasp on the whirlwind of events transpiring in the dense jungle along the Driniumor. From Martin's viewpoint, the covering force had performed their primary mission by slowing down Eighteenth Army's attack. Having no reserves to plug the hole in his lines, he wanted to recall the two elements conducting the reconnaissance-in-force and withdraw three miles to River X, where his battalions could reconsolidate and at least get between Tadj Drome and the Japanese. Hall reluctantly granted this request, but his perception of Martin under fire cost the covering force commander his job. Unimpressed with Martin's pessimism and his readiness to fall back at the first opportunity, Hall recalled him to Aitape and placed General Gill in charge of covering force operations. For his part, Gill shared Martin's outlook and thought Hall was dangerously downplaying the gravity of the situation. All the same, he eagerly accepted a chance to get in on the action.<sup>23</sup>

The 112th spent most of 11 July falling back to River X. The regiment's dawn patrols south and southeast of Afua village had bumped into strong enemy detachments. Despite this indication that the Japanese were threatening to envelop the right flank of the Driniumor line, Cunningham considered the withdrawal unnecessary and preferred to remain in his dug in

positions. Facing the prospect of another miserable trek through the jungle, he accepted the order unenthusiastically.<sup>24</sup> At 1000, 2d Squadron returned from its foray and joined the rest of the regiment. Two hours later, 1st Squadron began its retrograde movement to its former positions. McMains' men departed at 1500, an hour before an air strike and artillery barrage fell on Afua to cover the withdrawal. Beginning late in the day, the march again took the troopers over tough terrain in the middle of a tropical rainstorm. The concurrent extraction of the attached 5th Portable Hospital with its patients and equipment further slowed the pace of the retreat. Darkness added to the tension. Finding it difficult to describe the ordeal, Lieutenant Chubbuck remembered, "Mud and rain and . . . slipping and sliding. . . . [Y]our foot [would trip over] . . . a root someplace and [sink into] a hole in the ground. And the more people walked, the slicker and worse it got . . . [especially for] the poor guys carrying their machine-guns and mortars and ammunition at night. . . . [We were] scared."<sup>25</sup> The 2d Squadron finally closed on River X at 2330 that night. Troop F, the rearguard, remained on the east side rather than take its chances crossing the river and approaching the regiment's perimeter. It became part of the regiment's hastily arranged defenses at 0730 the follow morning.

While his units regrouped, Hall developed plans for a counteroffensive. Bolstering the covering force with two battalions from 124th Infantry, the PTF commander created North Force and South Force. Each would push out on separate axes back to the Driniumor and then turn inward, closing the gap between the two and restoring the line before inflicting further punishment upon the Japanese. It did not take long for Hall and Gill to organize their forces for the move east. Certainly, an emergency visit on 11 July by Krueger spurred them forward. Believing that the retreat had been completely uncalled for, the Sixth Army commander demanded an immediate return to the Driniumor.

Orders for the advance reached the 112th on the evening of 12 July. After a day spent reconnoitering and digging in for an expected attack, the mission to return to the positions they had so abruptly vacated the day before met with some resentment among the weary troopers. For this next phase of the operation, Cunningham retained control of the 127th's 3d Battalion, which together with the 112th constituted South Force – or, in jibing reference to its commander's hairless scalp, Baldy Force. Leaving the 112th's Reconnaissance Platoon at River X to help maintain communications, the southern axis of PTF's counterattack moved out at 1000 on 13 July, pushed aside an enemy detachment of seventy-five men with the assistance of artillery fire, and reached its objective around 1530. Occupying Afua fifteen minutes after an air strike, 1st Squadron took up positions as Baldy Force's right flank, with 2d Squadron to its left. 3d Battalion dug in further north along the Driniumor near the spot it had vacated days before when the Japanese had shattered the line.

Once on the river, American units in the north and south attempted to move swiftly toward each other in order to plug the hole in the PTF line. On 14 July, Baldy Force dispatched patrols in all directions, searching for the Japanese. Few were found. Nor could north-probing patrols of 3d Battalion locate the 124th U.S. Infantry, supposedly pushing south. Groups of Americans from units that had been cut off since the 10 July night attack trickled into the perimeter, but this did little to narrow the yawning gap, which at this point was still roughly twenty-five hundred yards wide. Believing Adachi's army too weak to exploit the break, Hall was not too concerned about it. Cunningham, in contrast, was particularly unsettled about his exposed left flank and extended his line one thousand yards north of his assigned sector. After an exchange of accusations regarding who had done their part by advancing far enough, Cunningham sent Troop E down river to find the 124th. Linking up with Company I on 15 July, the cavalymen spent the night in its perimeter. The following morning, they led the

infantrymen south to tie in with Baldy Force. Having made good use of the gap in U.S. lines over the past several days, the Japanese naturally contested the latest effort to seal it off. Troop E rejoined the regiment after a tough yet favorable day of fighting, but the line along the Driniumor was not fully restored until 18 July.<sup>26</sup>

Though encouraged by his initial breakthrough, Adachi now realistically considered his alternatives given the extent of Japanese casualties, logistical difficulties, and the steady advance of the U.S. counterattack. Dismissing an assault on Tadj Drome as unviable, the Eighteenth Army commander instead decided to concentrate his remaining force against the Americans that he had been grappling with on the Driniumor. The main blow would come from two understrength regiments of the 20th Division, assembling in the jungle two thousand yards northwest of Afua village. Consolidated under the command of Major General Miyake Sadahiko and dubbed Miyake Force, its first target was the village itself. Hitherto on the periphery of the campaign's major fighting, the 112th would now find itself in the midst of a desperate struggle.

While he dealt with the gap to his north, Cunningham became aware as well of increased enemy activity to his south and west. On 15 July, a wire maintenance crew was ambushed on the trail running back to River X, and the outpost there came under attack by a company-sized force. Reconnaissance patrols observed well-armed groups of Japanese moving in both directions across the Driniumor approximately twenty-five hundred yards south of Afua. Even more disconcerting was the report from PTF stating that there were strong indications of two enemy regiments forming to the rear of Baldy Force. Charged with stepping up the counteroffensive, Gill denied Cunningham's request for an additional infantry battalion to meet these surfacing threats, so the latter compensated by moving Troop A from its defenses overlooking the river and shifting it to some wooded high ground just northwest of Afua. Thus, by 18 July, the positions of Baldy Force resembled a fishhook bent westward. Its line extended

along the Driniumor thirty-five hundred yards north from Afua. The two squadrons and 3d Battalion shared that frontage, but 1st Squadron – with Troop A oriented west on a separate line – did not have the luxury of maintaining one troop in reserve.

Cunningham's concern regarding Baldy Force's rear was justified. The attack came on the evening of 18 July as two battalions of Japanese swarmed out of the jungle and drove Troop A from Afua and 250 yards to the northeast. Troop B shifted its line to protect its right flank, and Cunningham sent two platoons – one from 2d Squadron and one from 3d Battalion – to where Troop A had regrouped. The next morning, the reinforced troop counterattacked, retook the village (to the relief of a few soldiers who had "played dead" during the brief Japanese occupation), and later pushed six hundred yards further southwest after an artillery concentration prepared the way. Minor skirmishes between patrols occurred over the next few days.

On 21 July, Troop C replaced Troop A as the element guarding the western approach to Baldy Force and assumed its positions shortly before the next blow struck. At 1645, a Japanese 75-mm mountain gun fired on Troop C's perimeter, wounding the 1st Squadron commander, Major Harry Werner, and Lieutenant Frank Fyke, in charge of Troop C. Following this opening salvo, roughly seven hundred enemy soldiers from the 79th Infantry Regiment assaulted and, in a bitter struggle, succeeded in cutting off Troop C from the rest of Baldy Force. Efforts to reestablish the line failed, as did Cunningham's attempt to pry loose the Japanese hold on the beleaguered troop with two platoons of infantry. One platoon managed to break through, but there it remained as Miyake Force gained control of the trails and high ground in the area. Additional efforts to lift the siege the next morning were repulsed by Japanese ambushes and made difficult by the dense vegetation that shrouded the surrounded troop's exact location. With his right flank exposed and uncertain of future enemy plans, Cunningham tightened the

remainder of his line by pulling Troop B north of Afua. Though leaving Troop C to fend for itself, this move secured the rear of Baldy Force – to include the vital resupply drop zone.<sup>27</sup>

Isolated and out of radio contact with the rest of the regiment, Troop C dug in deeper around its 175-yard perimeter and, over the next couple of days, fought off Japanese probes while it listened to U.S. artillery pounding the nearby jungles. On 23 July, two more battalions from the 127th Infantry joined Baldy Force, and, with the help of these units, Cunningham orchestrated the rescue of Troop C. The 1st Battalion, 127th Infantry relieved Troops A and B north of Afua. These two cavalry units were to move west toward their surrounded comrades while the newly arrived infantrymen of 2d Battalion attacked southeast. The latter broke through to Troop C just before dark, but attempts to extricate the besieged troop faltered until the morning of 25 July, when the weary soldiers of Troop C finally could make their way back to the Baldy CP and briefly recover from their four-day ordeal. In the meantime, Troop B had recaptured Afua two days earlier.

From 25 to 28 July, Baldy Force conducted a number of limited offensives along the trail running west out of Afua to the village of Palauru. By pushing south of this trail – mainly with elements from 1st and 2d Battalion – Cunningham hoped to sweep the area clean of Japanese. However, the jungle proved too porous, and, as much as he sought to maintain the initiative, the general found himself reacting to aggressive enemy detachments. One patrol apparently located the Baldy CP area near the drop zone and subjected it to light artillery and mortar fire on the evening of 25 July, compelling Cunningham to move his operation to a safer place five hundred yards to the north.

Gains on the ground south of Afua merely made the Americans vulnerable elsewhere. When infantrymen advanced beyond the Afua-Palauru trail, they opened themselves up to harassing fire from multiple directions. Moreover, enemy soldiers slid behind them and secured

the trails leading back to the drop zone and their base of supply. Japanese in the area also thwarted efforts breakthrough a mere 150 yards of jungle to link-up with Company G, which had taken up a position southwest of Afua days before. Meanwhile, enemy detachments occupied ridgelines west and southwest of the drop zone, forcing Cunningham to withdraw 1st Battalion and coordinate an attack combining that unit and part of 1st Squadron. This hard-fought assault on 27 July secured the dropping area for the time being but prohibited Baldy Force from concentrating on eliminating the enemy in its sector.

Taking the persistent threats from the south and west as indicators of imminent Japanese attack, Cunningham abandoned Afua again and recalled 2d Battalion to the north on 28 July. Thinking it best to shorten his lines and safeguard his supply lifeline, he arranged his three battalions and two squadrons into a twenty-five hundred-by-two hundred-yard oval-shaped perimeter that enclosed the drop zone and ran parallel to the river. Another unsuccessful attempt to clear south from the drop zone was made the next day. Stymied again, Cunningham regrouped and planned for another offensive. On 30 and 31 July, Baldy Force conducted local patrols, seeing little action – with the exception of Company G, finally returning to the perimeter from its outpost and fighting every step of the way.<sup>28</sup>

All of this went on while Cunningham jostled through verbal and written messages with an impatient General Gill. The covering force commander wanted Baldy Force to clear the area and fumed at any delay brought about by Cunningham's efforts to shore up his defenses. As Gill saw it, his subordinate was overestimating the size of the Japanese force around Afua, but, in fact, Cunningham had much to be concerned about. As of 30 July, Baldy Force had sustained heavy casualties – 106 killed, 386 wounded, 18 missing. In addition, it had lost 426 men to disease in the harsh jungle environment. These staggering figures amounted to 20 percent of the authorized strength of the units under Cunningham's command. (If expressed in terms of



assigned strength, the percentage would be considerably higher.)<sup>29</sup> To be sure, the GIs were grinding down the Japanese, but with the arrival of reinforcements – including two regiments of the 41st Division – Miyake Force had increased in size to four thousand men as Adachi pinned all of his hope on overwhelming the American positions around Afua. Filtering across the Driniumor during the last week of July, these forces had disrupted Cunningham's attempts to push south, and, in the first days of August, they would spoil his next offensive.

From 1 to 4 August, elements of the Eighteenth Army launched three assaults against the perimeter of Baldy Force in a last ditch effort to destroy what it could of the American covering force east of Tadjji Drome. At first light on 1 August, a battalion from the Japanese 238th Infantry Regiment rushed from the jungle on a narrow front and charged Troop C's sector of the perimeter. Responsive and accurate artillery fire broke up the attack as it came in massed suicidal waves. By 0800, the fight was over. Small patrols ventured forth and counted roughly 180 enemy dead outside the perimeter. Troop G conducted a reconnaissance-in-force southwest toward where the assault had originated but encountered only light opposition. A minor attack was easily repulsed at 0300 the next morning, but this prompted Cunningham to shift 2d Squadron from the river line to the CP area to serve as a mobile reserve in the likely event of another more powerful assault. This came at 1900 that evening when three hundred Japanese surged toward the sector held by the 127th's 1st Battalion. A smaller supporting force hit 1st Squadron at 1945. Again, the desperate attacks were stopped cold by heavy mortar, artillery, and machine-gun fire. Other than a minor probe on 1st Battalion's lines in the early morning darkness, 3 August passed relatively quietly. Later that day, the reinforcements that Cunningham had long requested arrived from Tadjji Drome – one battalion from the 43d Infantry Division. In the end, this late addition mattered little. Miyake Force struck again at 0615 on 4 August. That move marked General Adachi's final effort west of the Driniumor, for its purpose

was to cover his crippled army as it retreated east. Falling upon 1st Squadron's sector, the Japanese assault – similar to the others in its astounding recklessness and futility – lasted for two hours, after which time the cavalymen counted at least two hundred dead outside the perimeter.<sup>30</sup>

Although the Eighteenth Army was on its last breath, Adachi sought to save what he could for another bloody day. For this reason, he broke contact with Baldy Force, fell back across the Driniumor, and headed southeast to escape the trap that General Hall had set during the final week of July. Impressed with the 124th Infantry in its first combat action, Hall handed it the assignment he hoped would bring about the destruction of the Eighteenth Army. With the situation in the northern sector under control, PTF sent the entire regiment east across the Driniumor to carry out an envelopment intended to net Adachi's remaining forces and prevent their retreat back to Wewak. Named "Ted Force" after its commander, Colonel Edward M. Starr, the 124th pushed east against minor resistance, slowly traversing the dense jungle and shell-torn terrain. On 3 August, Starr turned south to cut off the Eighteenth Army and shifted course slightly to the southwest on the 6th, but, by that time, he was engaging the Japanese rearguard. Though it inflicted some eighteen hundred casualties on the enemy, Ted Force was not quick enough to catch the bulk of Adachi's survivors. The 124th reached Afua on 10 August.<sup>31</sup>

For the 112th, the long campaign had been winding down since 4 August. Patrols skirmished with enemy stragglers, and 2d Squadron crossed the Driniumor to screen Ted Force's right flank for a four-day stretch as it continued southwest toward Afua. In the meantime, the cavalymen searched the recent battleground for the bodies of comrades they had buried in temporary graves. With much of the ground blown apart by artillery shells, some were never found. Troopers, however, discovered more Japanese corpses. All told, the 112th estimated that

it had killed 1,604 enemy soldiers and had suffered 190 battle casualties itself. Including evacuations due to disease, losses probably numbered somewhere between 20 and 25 percent of its strength. Their ranks considerably depleted, Cunningham's men marched to the mouth of the Driniumor on 11 August, boarded trucks, and returned along the coast to Aitape.<sup>32</sup>

The primary focus of the regiment as it pulled out of the line in mid-August was – quite reasonably – rest and reconstitution. Nevertheless, all knew that future campaigns awaited the 112th, and it thus came as no surprise when Hooper published a plan outlining how the unit would get ready for that eventuality. The 17 August training memorandum expressed the importance of drawing on the past to better prepare for the next fight, placing “emphasis . . . on the adaptation of . . . tactics and technique [*sic*] to conditions existing in this theater. . . . Constant study and practical application will be made of lessons learned in recent combat.”<sup>33</sup> In the process of looking back, the troopers found that they had learned more than they cared to know.

Although blooded in the jungles of New Britain, the regiment found fighting on the Driniumor to be a step beyond what it had previously experienced. For one, the harsh environment of the New Guinea coastal region in July and August was a far cry from the coconut plantation at Cape Merkus. Despite seeming uncomfortable by garrison standards, living conditions at Arawe improved greatly as troopers cleared the peninsula and began to enjoy the plentiful output of America's logistical machine. The cavalrymen also missed most of the monsoon season since the first heavy rains on New Britain's southern coast did not hit until May – just one month before the unit's departure.<sup>34</sup> This contrasted sharply with the torrential downpours that fell east of Aitape. While on the Driniumor, troopers may have benefited from U.S. logistics, but few luxuries floated down from the cargo planes and into the drop zone near the Baldy Force CP. Dirty, muddy, and miserable, soldiers endured what was for them

unprecedented discomfort and hardship. Added to this bleak picture were thousands of Japanese who – unlike the generally defensive-minded and numerically inferior foe on New Britain – actively sought to annihilate the American covering force. Indeed, the tactical conditions transformed the forty-five day campaign into a desperate struggle for survival. “I think there were several days we didn’t know whether we were going to make it or not,” recalled Judson Chubbuck.<sup>35</sup>

More so than the fighting between the fixed lines of defense on Cape Merkus, chaos characterized combat amid the jungles of the Driniumor, as both forces grappled with each other in a shifting battle of movement and counter-movement. Historian Edward Drea describes the typical small unit meeting engagement east of Aitape: “The abrupt stutter of a light machine gun or bark of rifle fire was followed by shouting, screaming, confusion, initial panic, and then more gunfire or a muffled grenade explosion as both sides reorganized. More likely, after the first gunshots, one side or the other (sometimes both) would run back into the thick vegetation for safety.”<sup>36</sup> From Cunningham’s perspective, the situation was equally fluid and uncertain. Poor radio communication hampered the control commanders could exercise over their subordinate elements. The dense undergrowth limited visibility between adjacent units and made it difficult to move in a coordinated fashion. In this environment, one hundred yards might as well have been one hundred miles. When the Japanese cut off Troop C from the rest of Baldy Force, it took two days and to find the isolated soldiers even though they had not moved from their original position.<sup>37</sup> Incisively illustrating the tangled problems leaders encountered in the fighting around Afua, Robert Ross Smith writes, “Neither the Japanese nor South [Baldy] Force had any accurate knowledge of each other’s strengths and dispositions. . . . Both sides employed inaccurate maps, and both had a great deal of difficulty obtaining effective reconnaissance. In

the jungled, broken terrain near Afua, operations frequently took a vague form – a sort of show boxing in which physical contact of the opposing sides was oftentimes accidental.”<sup>38</sup>

Nevertheless, Cunningham had difficulty justifying his actions in the seesaw battle with Miyake Force. The close oversight of Hall and Gill was a marked change from the relative independence the ill-tempered cavalryman enjoyed on Arawe. In July 1944, both command structure and the strategic situation were vastly different from what they had been six months before. As the head of Director Task Force, Cunningham had reported directly to General Krueger. On the Driniumor, however, there were two intermediaries, each under heavy pressure to destroy Adachi’s army so that U.S. forces committed to the Aitape area could be transferred elsewhere in theater.<sup>39</sup> In the thick of the fighting during late July, Cunningham and Baldy Force became subject to intense scrutiny. The decision to yield terrain in order to protect the drop zone especially perturbed Gill and Hall, who demanded to know “why two companies caused a battalion to withdraw.”<sup>40</sup> Already straining to respond to the multiple threats of Miyake Force, the frontline commander had little tolerance for such an inquiry. Moreover, his belief that his superiors had no appreciation for the challenges he faced irked Cunningham further.<sup>41</sup> The leader of Baldy Force was not off base in drawing this conclusion. In his memoir, Gill described the situation: “Cunningham kept reporting that he was being attacked by the Japanese and had to have reinforcements. There were some minor attacks down there . . . but these were connected with the fact that the Japs were starving to death. . . . A lot of the activity that was reported as Japanese attacks were simply attempts on the part of the disorganized elements of the Japanese army to raid our supply lines. . . . So it wasn’t too serious, but it was interesting.”<sup>42</sup> Based on what Gill remembered of the actions on the Driniumor, it almost seems as if he directed a battle quite different from the desperate struggle in which Baldy Force found itself.

Though defiant, Cunningham's 30 July letter to Gill contained the language of one expecting to be relieved. "The situation is not of such character as to be readily cleaned up," he insisted. "The enemy is apparently operating in company or perhaps battalion strength, moving through the jungles, using surprise and infiltration tactics. They are hard for us to locate, pin down and attack." The disgruntled commander continued, "Casualties have been high and will continue to be high. . . . I do not believe that this can be avoided under jungle conditions." Cunningham also pointed out that, in the melee around Afua, he was not only the hunter but the hunted as well: "Our forces have been, and are now, subject to attack from three sides, of which the western side [protecting the drop zone] has been the most vulnerable. The high ground on the West . . . must, in my opinion, be held." He presented his immediate plans and concluded: "I have tried to carry out your wishes to the best of my ability; it is evident that results have been unsatisfactory. Needless to say, I regret this situation."<sup>43</sup> Hall forwarded this correspondence to Krueger with an attached letter, assuring his boss that "Cunningham had been handling a very difficult situation as well as could be expected."<sup>44</sup> Coming from a rear-echelon general who consistently minimized the gravity of the fighting around Afua, this mild praise would have come as a surprise to the embattled commander of Baldy Force.

The regiment's location deep in the jungle, the confusing nature of combat, and pressures from higher headquarters combined to make the 112th's struggle on the Driniumor different from anything its men had previously experienced. As a result, the battle taught the troopers many lessons. The lessons learned identified in the unit's historical report for the operation came from the observations of troop commanders, lieutenants, and enlisted men.<sup>45</sup> This process of gathering the recommendations of subordinates and reviewing them at higher levels of leadership indicates that the 112th hoped to do more than simply gather enough data to

complete a required report. It suggests that the unit looked back in all seriousness on the battle just completed as preparation for the ones to come.

For the regiment and for PTF as a whole, the experience along the Driniumor tested the concept of aerial resupply. From the start of the campaign, providing logistical support for frontline units posed a challenge, especially for those like the 112th positioned inland. Fifteen miles of jungle separated the Driniumor and Aitape. Although PTF assembled eleven hundred native carriers to offset the problem of overland transport, it became apparent early on that the bulk of resupply would have to be delivered almost entirely by air. In an unprecedented American logistical triumph, four C-47 cargo planes made drops nearly everyday, providing roughly fifty-five hundred soldiers in PTF with a wide range of necessities in a highly responsive manner – as quickly as three to four hours from the time of request.<sup>46</sup>

In its previous campaign, the 112th received some supplies by air but not to the extent that survival depended on it. Initial attempts east of Aitape left room for improvement. With the dropping ground located on rocky terrain, 50 percent of the rations broke open on impact. When Baldy Force dug in along the Driniumor, it selected a more suitable spot for its drop zone. Over time, Baldy CP and the S-4 detachment operating out of Tadjji Drome learned by trial and error the crucial skill of aerial resupply. For example, certain types of rations could fall freely to the earth. Others required parachutes. Blankets, clothing, and canvas made excellent wrapping material and reduced breakage for most items, but no amount of wrapping provided enough protection for ammunition, medical supplies, and communications equipment. These too needed parachutes to remain usable. All told, the system worked well, and ground commanders in the regiment were satisfied with the logistical support. Cunningham's aide recalled, "We had the 'must-haves.'"<sup>47</sup> Indeed, everything from tents, hand grenades, barbed wire, and batteries to pencils, razors, spoons, and spare parts were delivered by air from the rear base at Aitape.<sup>48</sup>

Poor communications disrupted the smooth flow of operations, and Baldy Force responded as best as it could with the signal equipment it had. In this respect, American technology proved no match for the jungle. Dense vegetation and humidity reduced the range of wireless communications, causing one lieutenant to grumble that his portable radio was useless after traveling more than a half-mile beyond the perimeter. With some indignation, Captain Hugh R. Hughes of Troop E declared, “Communications have always been taken too much for granted in this organization. There was absolutely no way for a troop or platoon commander to communicate to his platoon or squad leads, while on an attack, except by shouting.”<sup>49</sup> For his part, the Troop F commander complained that, during movement, “troops usually do not have communication with squadron headquarters, other than by runner.”<sup>50</sup> Disappointment with the limitations of technology was not restricted to the lower echelons. Even the more powerful radio at Baldy CP was sensitive to changing atmospheric conditions, working fine during the day but becoming undependable and choked with static at night. There was little the 112th could do about fixing these problems, but the regiment tried minor alternatives. Pigeons were used to send messages between the CP and regiment’s rear detachments, particularly the S-4. On 10 July, someone at Cunningham’s headquarters complained, “I can’t get anyone interested in pigeons, but feel I should have at least two birds at all times.”<sup>51</sup> The next day, the S-4 sent six birds forward via native carrier and hoped to replace them every four to five days. The 112th made good use of artillery liaison planes as well. Piper Cubs snagged written messages by way of a jury-rigged pole system. They also served as overhead relay stations – especially at night when communications were at their worst.

Within the perimeter, wire communications functioned reliably, but lines that reached back to the rear were far more tenuous. Stretching for miles, these were often cut by American artillery or Japanese patrols. Signal personnel laid wire in the mud alongside trails for better



concealment, but this had a limited effect. Indeed, GIs moving up and down the jungle tracks were prone to drag and damage the lines by accident. Given a seemingly unlimited supply of wire, soldiers avoided the difficulty of finding and repairing breaks in the lines – particularly when it was believed that the enemy set ambushes near these points – and simply laid new ones.<sup>52</sup>

The New Britain campaign provided the 112th with crucial experience in patrolling, but, when tested in the more complex tactical situation on the Driniumor, leaders and soldiers demonstrated that they still had much to learn. At Arawe, the enemy's defenses proved extremely difficult to overcome, but at least the position constituted a fixed (though admittedly well-hidden) target upon which the regiment could focus its patrol efforts and supporting artillery fire. Troopers initially lacked boldness but soon found that small reconnaissance patrols could penetrate the Japanese sniper screen and push forward to pinpoint machine-gun nests.<sup>53</sup> With each probe, the 112th became increasingly familiar with the positions it opposed. This relative stability stood in contrast to the fluid battlefield east of Aitape. There, the uncertainty of enemy strength and intentions, coupled with the regiment's virtual isolation in the jungle around Afua, imposed far more dangerous terms on the cavalymen's environment.

Upon reaching the Driniumor, Baldy Force knew enough to dispatch four to five patrols each day to gather information on the surrounding terrain and to search for signs of the approaching Eighteenth Army. But even after Adachi launched his 10 July attack, the Japanese were hard to find, and the constant movement as both sides jockeyed for position amid the dense vegetation added to the difficulty. No doubt, there were many successful small unit actions, but Cunningham was sufficiently disappointed to admit later that he did not "believe most of our patrols to the east ever did what they said they did." He thought many just went out a short distance and did nothing but sit in place and purposefully avoid danger.<sup>54</sup> Hall felt the same way

about the units of PTF in general. In a letter to Krueger, the XI Corps chief wrote, "I am pushing commanders on patrolling. . . . I am afraid it is too late here to teach the principles of patrolling, but we are still trying to do it."<sup>55</sup>

The junior officers and enlisted men actually conducting the patrols had their own damning comments. They accused the high command of improper planning and resented senior leaders for sending them into the jungle to carry out challenging tasks with inadequate resources. Sergeant J. E. Priest lamented the fact that only a few detachments left the perimeter with decent radios. Staff Sergeant Jack Tilson stated bluntly, "Men are sent out on patrols with too little information." A fellow trooper even suggested that "at times bits of information are with-held [*sic*]." Sergeant Harvey Griggs indirectly criticized higher headquarters' overly complex orders: "Give patrols one mission, and one only. . . . Giving three or four missions . . . causes only confusion" and makes them "impossible . . . to accomplish." Corporal Livie Hill complained, "At times combat patrols are sent out that are too small even to consider completing the mission."<sup>56</sup> If Cunningham's suspicion was true, the practice of "hiding out" in the jungle simply may have been an adaptive response to deal with what some troopers considered dangerous, misguided, and unattainable missions.

One troop commander blasted his superiors: "There were too many instances of patrols being sent out for reconnaissance, reporting what they found, there [*sic*] report not being believed by staff personnel, and criticism offered to the patrol leader because he didn't fire on the enemy even though the mission was reconnaissance." This "complete lack of faith . . . causes a serious psychological attitude on the part of patrols as to why go out when they won't believe your report." He also decried the "very bad practice" of "rewarding a patrol that does a bad job by not sending it out again."<sup>57</sup>

Leaders at regimental level probably chafed at this justified condemnation. In his dealings with Hall and Gill, Cunningham knew all too well the frustration that came when higher headquarters downgraded the seriousness of the situation around Afua and suspected him of exaggerating his predicament. The old cavalryman shared his troopers' dissatisfaction with the dissemination of intelligence as well. In his 30 July letter to Gill and Hall, Cunningham discreetly lodged this grievance: "My estimate of enemy strength in this sector is based upon [32d] Division G-2 reports, POW information and enemy action. It cannot be as accurate as higher headquarters."<sup>58</sup>

Displeased with the results of patrolling, the 112th increasingly required officers to lead patrols and habitually called on its best to do so. When the unit first deployed to the jungles east of Aitape, NCOs – as far as it can be discerned – were placed in charge of patrols just as much as lieutenants. According to the regimental diary, sergeants headed patrols at least nineteen times from 1 to 10 July. Compared with the twenty-one officer-led patrols over the same period, the assignment of responsibility seemed evenly distributed. It shifted dramatically after the Japanese attacked in strength along the Driniumor. During the major fighting from 11 July to 4 August, the diary identified NCOs as patrol leaders in only six instances. In sharp contrast, patrols under the direction of officers numbered forty-seven.<sup>59</sup> This imbalance drew criticism from commanders and their lieutenants (sergeants did not seem to be troubled by the change). "Though patrolling is of great importance to a successful operation, too often officers are required to take patrols that could be handled by an NCO," wrote Major McMains. Such frequent patrolling resulted "in the officer being overworked and fatigued. It also causes a great mental strain."<sup>60</sup> One troop commander noted the unfairness of "penalizing" soldiers that performed well by sending them on patrol repeatedly. For certain missions, higher headquarters even selected the patrol leaders it preferred.<sup>61</sup> Regardless of these complaints, in its fight for

survival on the Driniumor, Baldy Force needed information, and it had to rely on patrols to obtain it.

In addition to bringing on almost universal frustration regarding patrolling, combat east of Aitape introduced the 112th to new defensive challenges. Unlike New Britain, the tactical situation along the Driniumor imposed both time and logistical constraints on Baldy Force. For one, the cavalymen lacked heavy engineer equipment. Though barbed wire and sandbags bolstered their positions, quantities were much less extravagant than they had been on Cape Merkus.<sup>62</sup> Moreover, wide frontages and the threat of attack from several directions compelled commanders to deploy their units in dispersed positions along the line, usually without a reserve. This set-up was a far cry from the fortified line across the base of the Arawe peninsula. Most importantly, the regiment faced a desperate enemy who attacked with an intensity the troopers had not previously witnessed.

The cavalymen diligently prepared their hasty defenses, digging in, clearing fields of fire, and learning as the campaign progressed to keep their own positions well concealed. “The entrenching tool is next in importance to a man’s [fire]arms,” wrote the Troop C commander.<sup>63</sup> Soldiers found it important to dig foxholes wherever they bivouacked and to cover their holes with logs or any available protective material. Even thin branches were enough to keep out hand grenades. The troopers carved firing ports all around their position, realizing that the Japanese could approach them from any direction. Platoons cleared away the thick vegetation in their sectors but initially overlooked the danger of fallen logs laying on the ground to the unit’s front. They found later that enemy infantrymen proved adept at taking cover behind them during an assault. Of course, soldiers thought it best to remove the logs, but one man discovered that plunging fire from a machine-gun countered the Japanese tactic. With fields of fire cut, the troopers laid strands of barbed wire across likely avenues of approach. Even in relatively small

amounts, this type of obstacle played a critical role in slowing down the waves of attacking enemy, and cavalrymen knew it. "I think wire should have priority over chow," remarked Sergeant Jack Tilson.<sup>64</sup> Soldiers could get too enthusiastic with their machetes. Removing underbrush to the unit's front was prudent, but slashing vegetation inside the perimeter and directly around foxholes made it too easy for the Japanese to locate CPs and individual positions. Instead, soldiers worked to maintain natural camouflage, thus striking a balance between fortification and concealment that was not attained at Arawe.<sup>65</sup>

The process of digging in was toilsome, and troopers understandably disliked vacating established positions, especially when they viewed the move as unnecessary or when the contemplated move was likely to occur at night. The cavalrymen never seemed to forget the regiment's miserable withdrawal through the black, rain-drenched jungle on 11 July. Haunted by that ordeal, leaders avoided night operations altogether. Looking back on the campaign, Captain George Thomas concluded, "Troops shouldn't be moved from one defensive position to another after it is too late to dig in properly before dark. Never should troops be moved from a defensive position after dark unless absolutely necessary. . . . Unless the movement is planned to the most intricate details [*sic*]; utter confusion . . . results."<sup>66</sup> The commander of Troop F put it more bluntly: "In a defensive position the best bet is to sit tight . . . Even if a unit is cut off and surrounded, it can still hold it's [*sic*] own if it will form a perimeter and wait for the enemy to make their suicidal charges. Particularly during darkness it is unwise to attempt any movement. Even though the situation seems hopeless at night, it is better to wait until daylight."<sup>67</sup>

The minor shifting of platoon positions along the line could be equally burdensome and perhaps more dangerous. Arriving at a designated location, troopers would begin to dig in and clear fields of fire only to have leaders inform them that the terrain was not suitable for defense or that they were too far away from adjacent units. This required soldiers to move a short

distance and start the process elsewhere. Often, these distances were so small that men ended up occupying areas they had just cleared of vegetation. Officers learned to make a thorough reconnaissance before committing their troopers to the arduous chore of digging in.<sup>68</sup>

For the most part, the 112th's jungle defenses proved more than adequate against the repeated attacks of Miyake Force. Light machine-guns once more were invaluable. Again, the cavalymen expressed confidence in the M-1 rifle and the Thompson SMG, finding that these weapons seldom jammed. The BAR was less popular, as troopers learned that it required special attention to function properly in wet, muddy conditions. Units continued to emphasize fire discipline, and leaders urged their soldiers to shoot their weapons only when they acquired definite targets. While machine-guns tore through the enemy's ranks, riflemen made excellent use of hand grenades. Corporal Roger Genthe from Troop C reported, "The fragmentation grenade is very good and should be used at night instead of rifle fire."<sup>69</sup> Major McMains was pleased with the relatively new white phosphorous smoke grenade, which not only inflicted casualties but also illuminated Japanese infantrymen as they approached the perimeter.<sup>70</sup> Lieutenant William Butcher brought up a curious lesson learned: "Men should never attempt to throw grenades out the firing slit of a covered position. If necessary they should throw them from [the] rear, and over the position."<sup>71</sup> As obvious as this admonition may seem, senior leaders judged it important enough to include in the regimental historical report.<sup>72</sup>

Indirect fire was probably the most decisive weapon employed by Baldy Force. An organizational change after the fighting settled down on Arawe placed the 112th's 60-mm mortars under the control of the rifle troops. However, on the defense, these weapons were still found to be most effective when centralized at squadron or regimental level. Together with the unit's 81-mm mortars (three had been airdropped late in the campaign), pre-registered 60-mm

mortars went far toward breaking up Japanese attacks.<sup>73</sup> The ex-stable crews had come a long way since New Caledonia.

In the battles east of Aitape, the 112th demonstrated its ability to coordinate artillery fires and, for the first time, employed them with devastating effect. Three battalions of 105-mm howitzers and another with 155-mm howitzers supported the entire Driniumor front. Positioned along the coast between Tadjji Drome and River X, these units combined to generate a massive expenditure of ammunition. Indeed, their guns fired over fifty-six thousand rounds – the most of any campaign in SWPA up to that time.<sup>74</sup> According to the 112th's historical report, "field artillery was very successful in this operation." In the defense, the regiment received enough artillery observers to post one with each rifle troop. The presence of these observers in line units shortened the response time of supporting fires and, "in a large measure, contributed to our success in stopping enemy attacks."<sup>75</sup> Though it required detailed persistence, registering artillery on pre-planned concentration areas paid dividends, as well. Field artillery liaison planes assisted the defensive effort not only by relaying calls for fire but also by adjusting rounds and identifying targets otherwise obscured by the jungle – including flashes from the few Japanese guns near the front. Sometimes, errant projectiles caused friendly casualties, and some hard-to-please cavalrymen complained about the difficulty of adjusting close-in fires in a timely fashion. Nevertheless, on balance, the howitzer battalions supporting PTF earned the heartfelt gratitude of the 112th. Indeed, Cunningham believed that "accurate and immediate artillery fire saved the situation more than once."<sup>76</sup>

The rainy weather, the relatively isolated jungle battlefield, the mission to stand and fight it out on the river line, and – of course – numerous Japanese all played a role in make the Driniumor campaign a miserable ordeal for the 112th. Troopers of all ranks remembered the experience as a bitter struggle for survival. In retrospect, it is intriguing to note the change in the

regiment's attitude toward its enemy. On Arawe, the cavalrymen regarded the Japanese with grudging respect. Despite being outnumbered and outgunned on Cape Merkus, Major Komori and his men repulsed every American assault until tanks arrived to drive them out. According to the unit historical report, "their stubborn resistance and tenacity were hard to overcome."<sup>77</sup>

Miyake Force received no such compliment. One troop commander disdainfully stated, "You can always tell when the Japs are going to attack. Their tactics are always the same."<sup>78</sup> A perceptive lieutenant wrote, "The Japanese soldier . . . has been played up as a superman too much. His imagination and power of thinking is almost nil and he always repeats his mistakes instead of correcting them. . . . Their tactics are somewhat outmoded (i.e. the charge) but they don't change them. The American soldier who is familiar with the Japanese in battle has less fear of them than the ones who are not."<sup>79</sup> Along the same lines, the 112th historical report claimed, "Our troops regarded the strength of the enemy resistance as inferior to that encountered in the Arawe, New Britain operation. . . . The enemy [was] 'easy' when caught out of his fox hole."<sup>80</sup> These were all illuminating observations that seemed to attest to the regiment's "coming of age" as it left the jungles behind them and returned to Aitape.

Displaying remarkable confidence in their abilities, the troopers emerged from what was arguably a tougher and more brutal fight than the showdown at Arawe. Even though both officers and men acknowledged their unit's shortcomings, they considered themselves to be – at the very least – more of a match for the enemy. Generally speaking, the Japanese assaults along the Driniumor were carried out with greater intensity and in larger numbers than those launched on Cape Merkus. Moreover, the 112th's defenses east of Aitape were not nearly as fortified, and encirclement was more probable. All the same, the regiment effectively fended off several Japanese attacks. Even on the offensive, Baldy Force enjoyed a measure of success when it responded quickly to enemy thrusts with aggressive counterattacks, striking with dismounted



cavalry and artillery before the Japanese could dig in adequately.<sup>81</sup> For reasons of timidity or uncertainty, such relatively bold moves did not occur on Arawe. Introduced to combat on Cape Merkus, the 112th built on this experience, learning and adapting in battle and through training. Blooded yet untested in many ways, the regiment came to the Driniumor. There, despite a tough environment and a desperate enemy, it fought, held together, and won.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA*, 116-22 (quote on p. 122); Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 9-21; Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 289-350, 379-82; Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 1-83, 103-10; Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 77-103.

<sup>2</sup> Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 188-89 (Adachi quoted on p. 188); Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 14-18, 24-29; Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 93. For a sympathetic biographical essay of Adachi, see Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor*, 91-109.

<sup>3</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report on the RECKLESS Operation," 13 October 1944, 29-32, Dunlap Collection (quote on p. 32); Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 31-39; Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 189-96. See also, Robert Ross Smith, "Comments and Off-the-record Remarks on Interview with Gen. Hall," March 1947, 1, Smith's Interviews for *Approach to the Philippines*, USAMHI. Here, Hall stated, "If the Japs had succeeded in breaking out Aitape perimeter and retaking the airfield and then pushing on toward Hollandia, the JCS would have immediately put a brake on Gen[eral] MacArthur's movements. The entire theory of bypassing would then have to be discarded and MacArthur would have been somewhat discredited."

To gain an appreciation for the fast-paced string of operations that characterized Sixth Army's 1944 New Guinea campaign, see Holzimmer, "A Soldier's Soldier," 328-446.

<sup>4</sup> Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 31-39; Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 189-96. For a concise analysis of the fighting east of Aitape, see Millard G. Gray, "The Aitape Operation," *Military Review* 31 (July 1951): 44-62. More recent interpretations find fault with Krueger and Hall in their management of the battle (see Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 208-9; and Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 136-39). In contrast, the most recent biographer of Krueger credits the Sixth Army commander with a sound battle plan but blames Hall for poor execution (see Holzimmer, "A Soldier's Soldier," 414-18, 422-34). For a narrative history of the campaign, see Prefer, *MacArthur's New Guinea Campaign*, 197-246.

<sup>5</sup> Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, "History of Medical Activities (4th Quarter)," 5 January 1944; "History of Medical Activities (1st Quarter)," 31 March 1944; "History of Medical Activities (2d Quarter)," 1 August 1944; all in Quarterly Medical Report, CAVR-112-MD-0.2, Box 18094, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. Witnessing the psychological breakdown of a comrade had a negative effect on the combat soldier. See Stouffer et al., *American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, 209.

<sup>6</sup> Carter, "Combat Veterans Survey," Dunlap Collection.

<sup>7</sup> S-1 Journal (Arawe), 3-14, RG 407, NA.

<sup>8</sup> "Regimental Diary," 13 March-30 April 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>9</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 15, RG 407, NA.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.; "Regimental Diary," 3 June 1944, RG 407, NA. Ernest Kelley, a light machine gunner with Troop A stated that he participated in only one attack on Arawe, spending the remainder of his time on perimeter defense (Kelley interview, author's collection).

<sup>11</sup> Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection. "Regimental Diary," 17 January-7 June 1944, RG 407, NA; S-1 Journal (Arawe), 3-16, *ibid.*; Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, "History of Medical Activities (4th Quarter)," 5 January 1944, *ibid.*; Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, "History of Medical Activities (1st Quarter)," 31 March 1944, *ibid.*; Medical Detachment, 112th Cavalry, "History

of Medical Activities (2d Quarter),” 1 August 1944, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Bulletins No. 4 (7 January 1944), No. 6 (19 January 1944), and No. 11 (28 January 1944), S-1 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, *ibid.*

For a discussion on comradeship in combat units, see Ellis, *The Sharp End*, 326, 345-52; Gerald F. Linderman, *The World Within War: America's Combat Experience in World War II* (New York: Free Press, 1997), 263-99; and Stouffer et al., *American Soldier: Combat and Its Aftermath*, 135-44.

<sup>12</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 8-28 June 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th Cavalry, S-1 Journal, 1, Historical Report, 21 June-25 August 1944, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427 [hereafter S-1 Journal (Aitape)], *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 26-28 June 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>13</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, “Historical Report, 21 June 1944 to 25 August 1944,” 1-2, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427 [hereafter “Historical Report (Aitape)”], RG 407, NA; Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 48. It is interesting to note that fifty-one men, including one squadron commander, were on furlough (probably in Australia) at the time Sixth Army tapped the 112th for duty at Aitape. Most caught up with the regiment during the first few weeks on the Driniumor, but many of these men did not return to the unit until 4 August – a day after the major fighting had ended. S-1 Journal (Aitape), 2-6, RG 407, NA.

<sup>14</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 19, RG 407, NA. Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 54. Robert Ross Smith summarizes the major differences between a cavalry and an infantry regiment by stating, “The cavalry regiment was about half the strength of an infantry regiment. It comprised only two squadrons, each composed of three troops, as opposed to the three battalions of four companies each in an infantry regiment. Instead of the three heavy weapons companies organic to the corresponding infantry unit, the 112th Cavalry had only one heavy weapons troop” (Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 135). Moreover, a cavalry troop was only authorized 167 men compared with 193 in an infantry company (Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 55).

<sup>15</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, S-4 Journal, a-b, Historical Report, 21 June-25 August 1944, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427 [hereafter S-4 Journal (Aitape)], RG 407, NA (quote on p. b). “Historical Report (Aitape),” 2-3, *ibid.*; “Regimental Diary,” 29-30 June 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> Chubbuck interview, Dunlap Collection. “Historical Report (Aitape),” 15-16, RG 407, NA. Just days after leaving Aitape, resupply planes from Aitape dropped enough shoes (not jungle boots) for three-fourths of the command (“Historical Report (Aitape),” 4, *ibid.*). The sock situation was so desperate that the S-4 airdropped 1,415 pairs of socks on 1 July. To acquire that many pairs, the S-4 “stripped everyone in the rear area to one pair of socks per man.” S-4 Journal (Aitape), c, 3, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 54. “Historical Report (Aitape),” 3, RG 407, NA.

<sup>18</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 3-5, RG 407, NA.

<sup>19</sup> HQ, Persecution Task Force (PTF), Report After Action (Aitape, New Guinea), 28 June-25 August 1944, 3, 98-TF8-0.3, Box 1561, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 39-41, 69-70; Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 195-97.

<sup>20</sup> PTF, Report After Action, 3, RG 407, NA. Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 70-72.

<sup>21</sup> Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 73-79; Taaffe, *MacArthur's Jungle War*, 198-99.

<sup>22</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 5, RG 407, NA; HQ, 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “Diary, 29 June-11 August 1944,” 2, CAVR-112-SQ(2)-0.3.0, Box 18094, Entry 427, *ibid.*; McMains interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>23</sup> Smith, “Comments and Off-the-record Remarks on Interview with Gen. Hall,” 1, USAMHI; William H. Gill, as told to Edward Jaquelin Smith, *Always a Commander: The Reminiscences of Major General William H. Gill* (Colorado Springs: Colorado College, 1974), 62-64; Taaffe, *MacArthur’s Jungle War*, 198-99.

<sup>24</sup> Julian W. Cunningham and Philip L. Hooper, interview by Robert Ross Smith, 8 April 1947, 2, Smith’s Interviews for *Approach to the Philippines*, USAMHI.

<sup>25</sup> Chubbuck interview, Dunlap Collection. “Historical Report (Aitape),” 6, RG 407, NA.

<sup>26</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 6-7, RG 407, NA; “Regimental Diary,” 12-13 July 1944, *ibid.*; Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 164-67. See also, Gray, “Aitape Operation,” 58. Gray, a staff officer with the 32d Infantry Division during the battle, argues that there were two Afuas – an old, abandoned village and a new one fifteen hundred yards upstream – and that both units were “correct” in reporting their locations. The confusion surrounding Afua was just one example of the problems units experienced with finding their way in the jungle. According to Gray, maps were inaccurate and not especially detailed: “About the only thing that could be depended upon was the location of the coast line and the major rivers.”

<sup>27</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 7-9, RG 407, NA; “Regimental Diary,” 15-21 July 1944, *ibid.*; Boland interview, 25-26, USAMHI; Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 96-101; Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 171-73.

<sup>28</sup> Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 104-110; Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 174-84.

<sup>29</sup> The 20 percent figure is based on an authorized strength of 1,728 men for the 112th and 3,118 men for the 127th (Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 55). For casualty figures, see Julian W. Cunningham to William H. Gill and Charles P. Hall, 30 July 1944. See also, Charles P. Hall to Walter Krueger, 31 July 1944; both in Dunlap Collection. These letters, as well as several others that Hall wrote to Krueger during the Driniumor campaign may also be found in the George Decker Papers, USAMHI.

<sup>30</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 12-14, RG 407, NA; Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 185-88.

<sup>31</sup> Taaffe, *MacArthur’s Jungle War*, 205-7.

<sup>32</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 14-15, RG 407, NA; S-1 Journal (Aitape), 7, *ibid.* Total losses for disease are not listed in the S-1 Journal, but, in his 30 July 1944 letter to Gill and Hall (in the Dunlap Collection), Cunningham noted that – as of that date – disease had caused the evacuation of 132 men from the 112th.

<sup>33</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 1, 17 August 1944, S-3 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>34</sup> Malcolm N. Moody to Edward J. Drea, 16 January 1992, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>35</sup> Chubbuck interview, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>36</sup> Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 60. For an excellent description of the jungle environment, see Bill Garbo, "Dog Platoon at the Driniumor River," n.d. [article on-line]; available from <http://www.kilroywashere.org/003-Pages/BillGarbo/BillGarbo.html>.

<sup>37</sup> "Historical Report (Aitape)," 9-10, RG 407, NA.

<sup>38</sup> Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 182.

<sup>39</sup> See Charles P. Hall to Walter Krueger, 16 July 1944, where Hall writes, "Our sole intention here is to clean this pocket up in the most expeditious way possible and release troops for your future operations." See also, Charles P. Hall to Walter Krueger, 28 July 1944 and 6 August 1944. All in the Dunlap Collection.

<sup>40</sup> Hall to Krueger, 31 July 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>41</sup> Smith, "Comments and Off-the-record Remarks to Cunningham-Hooper Interview," USAMHI.

<sup>42</sup> Gill, *Always a Commander*, 59.

<sup>43</sup> Cunningham to Gill and Hall, 30 July 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>44</sup> Hall to Krueger, 31 July 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>45</sup> See "Historical Report (Aitape)," 15-18; and numerous memoranda in HQ, 112th Cavalry, Lessons Learned, 1943-1944, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427; both in RG 407, NA.

<sup>46</sup> PTF, Annex 7 (Quartermaster), Report After Action, 28 June-25 August 1944, 98-TF8-0.3, Box 1561, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; PTF, History of the PTF Supply Operation, 28 June-23 August 1944, 98-TF8-4.1, Box 1562, Entry 427, *ibid*.

<sup>47</sup> Chubbuck interview, Dunlap Collection. "Historical Report (Aitape)," 4, RG 407, NA; HQ, 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, "Summary of Lessons Learned," 31 August 1944, 1, Lessons Learned, 1943-1944, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, *ibid*.; S-4 Journal (Aitape), b-c, *ibid*.

<sup>48</sup> S-4 Journal (Aitape), 3-47, RG 407, NA. It must be noted that native carriers protected by armed American escorts brought forward fragile items when parachutes were not available. Native stretcher bearers were also the primary means of casualty evacuation to Aitape. "Historical Report (Aitape)," 4, *ibid*.

<sup>49</sup> Troop E, 112th Cavalry, "Historical Report – Summary of Lessons Learned," 30 August 1944, 1, Lessons Learned, 1943-1944, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. Norman R. Benteman, "Recollections," 1990, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>50</sup> Troop F, 112th Cavalry, "Summary of Lessons Learned," 30 August 1944, 1, Lessons Learned, 1943-1944, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>51</sup> S-4 Journal (Aitape), 11, RG 407, NA. Cunningham and Hooper interview, 1, USAMHI.

<sup>52</sup> S-4 Journal (Aitape), 11-12, RG 407, NA; Cunningham and Hooper interview, 1, USAMHI; Beggs, "Recollections," Dunlap Collection. For a picture of a Piper Cub collecting a message through the use of a pole system similar to the one that Hooper mentioned, see Nalty, *Cape Gloucester*, 23.

<sup>53</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 17, RG 407, NA.

<sup>54</sup> Smith, “Comments and Off-the-record Remarks to Cunningham-Hooper Interview,” USAMHI.

<sup>55</sup> Hall to Krueger, 16 July 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>56</sup> All quotations in Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Combat,” 31 August 1944, 2-3, 6, 8, Lessons Learned, 1943-1944, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. For a discussion on how American soldiers dealt with “impossible” orders, see Linderman, *World Within War*, 215-17.

<sup>57</sup> Troop E, 112th Cavalry, “Historical Report – Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2, RG 407, NA.

<sup>58</sup> Cunningham to Gill and Hall, 30 July 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>59</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 1 July-10 August 1944, RG 407, NA. This data only takes into account the patrols headed by a leader whose rank is mentioned in the diary. The regiment, of course, dispatched several other patrols. Patrols had a variety of missions, including liaison to the rear and flanks, counter-reconnaissance, and reconnaissance. Before 11 July, when officer and NCO-led patrols were comparable in quantity, officers typically were assigned reconnaissance missions while NCOs handled patrols with the mission of liaison. Incidentally, as the intense situation on the Driniumor settled down after 4 August, the officer and NCO leadership of patrols became more balanced again. From 5 to 10 August, sergeants headed five patrols; officers led four.

<sup>60</sup> 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 31 August 1944, 2-3, RG 407, NA.

<sup>61</sup> Troop E, 112th Cavalry, “Historical Report – Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2, RG 407, NA.

<sup>62</sup> A quick comparison of S-4 Journals supports this claim. See S-4 Journal (Arawe), RG 407, NA; and S-4 Journal (Aitape), *ibid.*

<sup>63</sup> Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Combat,” 31 August 1944, 16, RG 407, NA.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 1, 2, 5, 11, 13 (quote on p. 1); Troop F, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2; both in RG 407, NA.

<sup>65</sup> Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Combat,” 31 August 1944, 11, 13, 15, RG 407, NA.

<sup>66</sup> *Ibid.*, 15.

<sup>67</sup> Troop F, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2, RG 407, NA. Squadron and regimental commanders agreed with their subordinates on this issue. See 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 31 August 1944, 2, *ibid.*; and Miller Journal, 29 July 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>68</sup> Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Combat,” 31 August 1944, 14, RG 407, NA.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid., 10-13, 16 (quote on p. 10). Historical Report (Aitape),” 16, RG 407, NA; Troop F, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 1-2, *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 31 August 1944, 2, RG 407, NA.

<sup>71</sup> Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Combat,” 31 August 1944, 13, RG 407, NA.

<sup>72</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 18, RG 407, NA.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., 16; Weapons Troop, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned,” 2 September 1944, Lessons Learned, 1943-1944, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>74</sup> PTF, Report After Action, 5, RG 407, NA. Rounds expended noted in Annex 8 (Ordnance) of Report After Action. Incidentally, the 148th Field Artillery – the howitzer battalion that had supported the 112th on Arawe – did not fire in support of the 112th or any other units of the covering force. It was detached from Cunningham’s task force and remained in the Tadjji Drome perimeter, out of range of the action on the Driniumor. After the campaign, it rejoined the 112th and supported the regiment on the Philippines. PTF, Annex 19 (Historical Report, 148th Field Artillery), Report After Action, *ibid.*

<sup>75</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 17, RG 407, NA.

<sup>76</sup> Cunningham and Hooper interview, 1, USAMHI. PTF, Report After Action, 14, RG 407, NA; Troop E, 112th Cavalry, “Historical Report – Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2, *ibid.*; Troop F, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2, *ibid.*; Hooper tape recording, October 2001, Dunlap Collection. For two incidents of friendly artillery fire, see “Regimental Diary,” 14-15 July 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>77</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 14, RG 407, NA.

<sup>78</sup> Troop E, 112th Cavalry, “Historical Report – Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2, RG 407, NA.

<sup>79</sup> Troop F, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 3, RG 407, NA.

<sup>80</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 15, RG 407, NA.

<sup>81</sup> See for example, “Historical Report (Aitape),” 7-8, 15; “Regimental Diary,” 16, 19 July 1944; both in RG 407, NA.

## CHAPTER V

### AITAPE INTERLUDE

Returning to Aitape on 11 August 1944, the 112th entered into a well-deserved rest period and began to recover from its forty-five-day ordeal on the Driniumor. Meanwhile, Sixth U.S. Army doggedly continued up the coast of New Guinea as it advanced toward the Philippines, MacArthur's ultimate objective in the Southwest Pacific. Though temporarily uninvolved with Sixth Army's steady progress and the combat it entailed, the RCT's senior leaders knew that it was only a matter of time before they would once again find themselves in the line of fire. Until then, the question was how best to prepare the unit to ensure its readiness when that moment arrived. Armed with several lessons learned in the jungles east of Aitape, the 112th developed a plan to improve the tactical skills of its soldiers and test its subordinate units' ability to coordinate their actions on the battlefield. Numerous obstacles stood in the way of this training program, however. Personnel shortages and requirements imposed by higher headquarters each worked against the implementation of the original plan, as did the recognition that genuine physical and psychological recovery involved slowing down the tempo of unit activity to some extent. The retraining period at Aitape was by no means wasted, but what the troopers accomplished during this two-and-a-half month interlude fell far short of initial expectations.

Simply trading their positions on the line for tents amid the comparatively civilized environment of the airdrome came as a relief to the weary cavalrymen, but the regimental supply officer made the resumption of garrison life even more attractive. On the evening of their arrival, the S-4 issued forty pounds of bread for every one hundred soldiers, two boxes of fresh beef to each cavalry troop, and two pairs of wool socks and a carton of cigarettes per man.



Candy and gum were doled out the next day.<sup>1</sup> The delivery of these amenities, modest as they were, marked a welcome end to the logistical scarcity that accompanied jungle fighting and aerial resupply. Nevertheless, refitting meant much more than improving the troopers' meals and granting them some items of personal comfort.

It also involved preparing for the next fight. In line with this goal, General Cunningham issued a 17 August memorandum describing the RCT's training plan for the next two months. The first two-week period of the three-phase program emphasized recovery, recreation, and the improvement of basic soldiering skills. In early September, the 112th was to enter the next phase with the expressed purpose of developing "proficiency in the use of all weapons and in the tactics and technique of units up to and including the troop."<sup>2</sup> Drawing on the lessons learned from the Driniumor campaign, leaders were to focus on a number of tasks ranging from the fundamental to the somewhat advanced. Physical conditioning, field sanitation, the use of camouflage, and familiarization firing with multiple weapons were included. The RCT also made defensive training a requirement, specifically mentioning perimeter defense and security as it applied to the jungle as well as the seemingly irrelevant tasks of defending against "air, chemical, and mechanized attack." Not surprisingly, scouting and patrolling were to be covered in the program – along with the related activities of "trail-blazing through the jungle," crossing difficult terrain and obstacles, and detecting and setting up ambushes. The memorandum also mandated practice on amphibious landings, as well as assaults on enemy fortified positions. Finally, according to this published guidance, the second phase also was to incorporate "small unit tactical training to include squad, platoon, and troop field exercises taken in that sequence" with "considerable latitude" given to lower echelon leaders as they planned and conducted these events. Dubbed the "combined training phase," the final three weeks of the program would consist of squadron command post and field exercises followed by the same activities at RCT-

level. The memorandum unambiguously stated that “at least one squadron . . . exercise will include firing artillery and service ammunition over the heads of troops.”<sup>3</sup> Though rather ambitious, this plan identified those tasks that leaders of the 112th considered most important as they paused to reflect on their latest battlefield challenges. Much work lay ahead before their return to the combat zone.

Before serious training could resume however, other matters had to be tackled. During the RCT’s first two weeks at Aitape, Cunningham named “improvement of discipline” and “restoration of soldierly appearance” as two of his top priorities.<sup>4</sup> Toward this end, squadron commanders walked through the ranks during daily afternoon formations and more thoroughly inspected personnel, equipment, and unit areas each Saturday – a routine that continued for the remainder of the regiment’s stay at the airdrome. The general also had his subordinate units conduct dismounted drill with weapons quite frequently and, toward the end of August, scheduled classes on military courtesy and guard duty. Perhaps to emphasize the need for such training, Cunningham scolded the RCT in writing for its lax attitude with respect to saluting in garrison and for the failure of command post personnel to demonstrate proper telephone etiquette.<sup>5</sup> One prominent World War II commentator (and veteran) would dismissively classify these actions as “chickenshit.”<sup>6</sup> Yet as petty as they seem, the general’s criticisms reflected the unavoidable concern of a leader faced with the challenge of rebuilding a unit significantly stretched and torn by the trials of combat. To Cunningham, establishing standards and instilling discipline were crucial first steps in this process of preparing the unit, with its increasing number of untested replacements, for future campaigns.

In fairness to the commander, the training plan seemed to accept the need for physical rest and mental recovery as well. The same memorandum that placed a premium on arduous discipline also highlighted swimming and athletics as important activities, and, despite the daily

formations, classes, and other events, the duty day for much of the 112th's stay at Aitape lasted only four hours.<sup>7</sup> In the transition from the front lines to the rear and back again, it is clear that leaders sought balance.

The energy devoted to making the regiment's new home one of relative comfort reflected this desire for balance. While some staff officers developed the training program, others managed the satisfying project of fixing up camp. The acquisition of nails and lumber was a main concern for the S-4, who obtained enough of this material through normal channels or by means of bartering to enable some improvement of the 112th's living conditions. Within a week, the men began working on tables and shelves for troop kitchens, an officers' mess for each of the two squadrons, orderly rooms, and several four-hole latrines. The unit's spirit of improvisation – so prevalent in combat – was also shown to thrive in garrison when the S-4 shop put together forty-eight makeshift urinals using tin piping and conical light reflectors. Rolls of wire were issued to the motor pool to fence off that facility, and enough wire mesh was found to screen Cunningham's quarters on 17 August. Benefiting from some troopers' flair for woodworking, the chaplain received a rostrum for religious services a week later.<sup>8</sup>

While the 112th had few problems acquiring the raw material to construct its base camp, the personnel required to build up unit rosters were much more difficult to find. The regiment had begun its most recent campaign with close to fifteen hundred officers and enlisted men, approximately 85 percent of its authorized strength. Combat on the Driniumor reduced this number by over 20 percent, with losses especially concentrated in the six line troops that had borne the brunt of the fighting.<sup>9</sup> The unit thus entered its period of rest short several hundred men. As he contemplated the task of preparing his outfit for its next battle with the Japanese, Colonel Miller viewed this numerical deficiency with some foreboding. The fact that Sixth Army offered little in the way of relief only made matters worse. Ninety or so soldiers had

reported to the unit in early August as the Driniumor operation concluded, but, once out of action, the personnel spigot slowed to a drip and eventually went dry.<sup>10</sup> Though anxious to receive more replacements, Miller could recover, refit, and train only the troopers he had on hand. This amount fluctuated but probably never exceeded twelve hundred while the 112th remained at Aitape.<sup>11</sup>

Adding to the problem of low assigned strength was inconsistency in the unit rolls due to temporary losses. As it turned out, a number of men who became casualties on the Driniumor due to disease or minor wounds eventually returned to the regiment, but it would take several weeks for the ebb and flow of those present for duty to subside. Injuries from the battlefield still took their toll throughout the remainder of August as at least twenty-five troopers departed for better-equipped hospitals in rear areas for further treatment. The 112th also sent troopers on furlough and, in fact, had a quota to meet in this regard. Thus, one lieutenant and sixty-four enlisted men boarded transports bound for Australia near the end of the month. This privilege extended to some members of the senior ranks as well. Leaving Miller to oversee much of the retraining and reconstitution of the regiment, Cunningham, his aide, and RCT executive officer Philip Hooper headed for the United States on 6 September and did not return until the 16th of the following month.<sup>12</sup> While the mild-mannered Miller almost certainly relished this time apart from the domineering personality of the commanding general, the absence of Hooper's steady hand at RCT headquarters was probably missed.

Along with the recovery of personnel came the repair or replacement of equipment. Units held thorough "show-down" inspections and submitted requisitions based on the shortcomings discovered. This process also had the effect of reestablishing property accountability.<sup>13</sup> In all likelihood, this had received scant attention during the month-and-a-half on the Driniumor since the S-4 responded to requests from the field without fretting over

preparing the documents that would assign responsibility for the delivered items. Not surprisingly, the proper functioning of weapons received the most scrutiny. Within days, the regimental S-4 shop collected the rifles, machine guns, and rocket launchers that had been identified as deficient and turned these over to the ordnance section of the 43d Infantry Division (also at Aitape) for repair. Beginning on 22 August, a maintenance team visited all of the troops over a period of several days and checked individual and crew-served weapons for malfunctions, fixing them when possible and otherwise issuing replacements. Around the same time, the 112th's four flamethrowers were inspected and refilled as well. The supply officer also turned in to the 43d's ordnance section eight typewriters that were "badly in need of repair" but lamented that he had received no assurance as to when these would be returned in working condition. While it may have been amusing to the rifleman, this request was no joke for the clerk. Indeed, there was much paperwork to catch up on – from administrative concerns (such as orders for Combat Infantryman's Badges, some new and others seven-months overdue) to training plans and schedules.<sup>14</sup>

After a week devoted to fixing up camp, taking care of equipment, and getting acclimated to the new garrison environment, the regiment began the first phase of its formal training program. From 21 August until the end of the month, the focus was on basic individual skills. Troopers spent their mornings in a variety of rather unexciting activities, but, with few exceptions, their afternoons during this period were set aside for personal time. When free from the dreariness of routine inspections, dismounted drill, and weapons cleaning, the cavalymen attempted to work their bodies back into shape through mass calisthenics and two-hour road marches. Swimming and athletic tournaments internal to the regiment characterized the lighter side of organized physical training. Apart from weapons proficiency, the military skills receiving the most attention at the individual level were map reading and the use of the compass.

Along with the instruction on guard duty and military courtesy, a smattering of classes taught by the medical detachment on the prevention of malaria and other jungle diseases rounded out the schedule.<sup>15</sup> Private William E. Beggs, a radio operator at RCT headquarters, found none of this the least bit interesting. He tersely summed up his own impressions of the first weeks at Aitape when he recalled that “we had little to do. . . . [we] played volleyball and got our stuff cleaned.”<sup>16</sup>

To relieve the boredom of the garrison routine, Beggs looked for additional work. The trooper volunteered to serve on a detail that assisted with the aerial resupply of American units still conducting patrols along the Driniumor River. Flying in the cargo area of a DC-3, Beggs and others shoved rations out the back of the plane as it passed at low altitude over the drop zone. On one trip however, the young radio operator experienced a breathtaking moment of high adventure when he slipped while pushing a crate out the door and barely caught himself before tumbling out of the aircraft along with the supplies. In spite of this harrowing close call, Beggs performed the duty for over a week, perhaps finding it a stimulating antidote for the tedium of the regiment’s daily schedule.<sup>17</sup>

Actual military operations interrupted the program around the time the 112th had planned to shift its focus from individual to unit training. On 1 September, the troopers received orders to relieve a regiment from the 43d Infantry Division and take its place on the outpost line east of Aitape along the Driniumor River. All but a rear echelon returned after spending just two weeks in garrison. Miller established his command post at a coastal village two miles west of the river’s mouth on 3 September and assumed the new mission the next day. For the next two-and-a-half weeks, the 112th conducted security patrols and guarded five newly constructed bridges, dividing up the responsibilities for these duties among subordinate units by area.

Although probably few men felt that they had been gone long enough to miss it, the jungle at least seemed more accommodating the second time around. This of course was primarily due to the almost complete absence of Japanese. The Driniumor bisected the regiment's sector, which extended along the coast for ten miles and inland for about half that distance, and, on most days, troopers found no signs of the enemy as they patrolled it. There were exceptions. In fact, GIs killed one Japanese straggler near a trail junction on 5 September and discovered three more the following day, killing one and capturing the others. A week later, a patrol happened upon six Japanese soldiers moving through the jungle. According to the 112th's diary, "attempts to take them prisoner were unsuccessful," and, as the enemy tried to flee, the troopers killed three and wounded two.<sup>18</sup> Unlike the regiment's other encounters during this period, these men were well clothed and provisioned and were armed with bayonets and grenades (though they apparently did not have rifles). In later run-ins on the 14th and 15th of the month, patrols discovered in each instance a lone, unarmed straggler who sought to avoid capture by running away. One escaped. The other did not.<sup>19</sup> Wandering without weapons in a quiet sector, and, in all likelihood, disease-ridden and starving after weeks of being stranded in the jungle, the Japanese soldiers that the troopers came across posed no substantial threat to the Aitape airdrome. Their presence, though, was enough to disrupt the regiment's training effort.

With the exception of the Reconnaissance Platoon (which remained at the mouth of the Driniumor for a time to guard an ammunition dump), the 112th returned to the Aitape camp on 21 September.<sup>20</sup> Although deploying back to a field environment so soon had been incredibly inconvenient, Miller saw some value in the experience. New replacements had gained some exposure to operating in the jungle, and there had been enough contact by elements of the regiment to encourage those troopers sent out on patrol to stay alert and take their mission seriously. The pace was not terribly rigorous, so there were opportunities for concurrent training

– obviously in scouting and patrolling but also in weapons firing and familiarization. However, the leadership and manpower demands of outpost duty undermined the 112th's ability to execute the ambitious plan it had developed. Senior leaders had intended these weeks to be spent honing a variety of tactical skills, culminating in platoon and troop field exercises.<sup>21</sup> Instead, the type of training conducted did not progress beyond squad level. Nevertheless, Miller cast the period in a positive light. For him (and presumably for others in the regiment), there had been daily swims in the ocean, fresh eggs on several occasions, and nights without rain more often than not. Finally, the colonel seemed pleased with what training the unit *did* carry out.<sup>22</sup> All the same, it would be difficult to redeem the lost time.

A formal schools program run by the 43d Infantry Division at Aitape was one mechanism for providing concentrated training to small groups of soldiers while the bulk of the regiment pulled duty on the outpost line. Schools lasted anywhere from one or two days to about a week and focused on specific skills that were usually technical in nature or likely to be employed by only a limited portion of the unit. Throughout September and part of October, the 112th sent troopers to a wide variety of courses, including ones for communications personnel, medical specialists, vehicle drivers, supply sergeants, mortar crewmen, and even buglers. Five officers attended a weeklong transportation school conducted by the division quartermaster. Regimental and squadron S-2s and their respective noncommissioned officers were taught interrogation techniques by the division intelligence section and received the added training value of testing their abilities on an actual Japanese prisoner. Selected cavalymen learned skills pertaining to amphibious warfare, such as shore party operations and how to waterproof vehicles.<sup>23</sup> As worthwhile as these training opportunities may have been to the handful of personnel who attended them, they were no substitute for tactical exercises at the small unit level. Nevertheless, the 112th probably could not have hoped for much more given the



circumstances. The fact that the regiment excused junior officers and soldiers from at least part of the patrolling and security mission demonstrated that senior leaders saw beyond the immediate task at hand and recognized the benefits of such training.

At least one trooper was especially grateful for SWPA's formal schooling program. When offered the opportunity to attend an eight-week communications course run by the Signal Corps in theater, Private William Beggs "gladly accepted" the prospect of taking a break from Aitape for awhile. He caught a cargo plane to Buna in early September and, after landing, made himself at home in the relative comfort of what by this time had become a substantial base in the rear area. The semi-permanent buildings, good mess halls, and walkways throughout the camp immediately impressed Beggs, as did his sleeping quarters. Though Aitape had similar accommodations, the pyramidal tents at Buna sat atop wooden platforms, and this all but eliminated the chances of seeing a rat scamper about one's living area. Pulling guard duty occasionally was a small price to pay for these luxuries. At the school itself, Beggs learned a bit of radio theory, increased his typing speed, and became quite proficient at sending and receiving messages in code. Unfortunately, these skills were more appropriate for communications personnel operating from fixed installations, and he never put this training into practice with the 112th. Nonetheless, the trooper enjoyed the school despite its near uselessness.

On the return trip to Aitape in mid-October, Beggs had trouble catching a connecting flight because the theater's fleet of cargo planes was busy supporting Sixth Army's invasion of Leyte. With space on aircraft limited, he and two other troopers who also had attended the course in Buna spent two weeks "just loafing around" at Dobodura airfield waiting for a flight to Aitape and secretly hoping that none would be available. At one point during this extended layover, Beggs caught a glimpse of entertainer Bob Hope, who was passing through the air terminal en route to another destination. Forgetting his own lazy satisfaction with remaining

indefinitely at the airfield, the private observed that, in contrast to Army enlisted men, VIPs like Hope seemed to have no problem securing a seat on a plane. By the time the young cavalryman rejoined the 112th, the outfit was already in battle on Leyte.<sup>24</sup> Fortunately in preparing for that fight, the regiment's use of time (though not totally efficient) differed markedly from the experience of Private Beggs.

As in the past, the unit's schedule placed a heavy emphasis on weapons training and live firing. Before they assumed outpost duty, squadrons and separate troops dedicated one-and-a-half hours to the assembly and functioning of the M-1 rifle, carbine, and Thompson SMG. With the exception of mortar crews (who trained on their own system during this period), all personnel were to become familiar with these weapons regardless of which one they were assigned. Later, cavalymen in the rifle platoons attended a similar session on the BAR while those assigned to light or heavy machine gun or mortar sections focused on their own crew-served weapons. Granted, these two ninety-minute classes took place amid a crammed schedule on a four-hour workday. Conducted at troop level, the training probably involved a number of men gathered around a few weapons and perhaps included some limited time for hands-on practice. In all likelihood, these sessions were not first-class, but their presence on the schedule and the intent behind the training reveals something about the priority senior leaders attached to weapons familiarization. They considered it important enough for each soldier to learn the basics of the many weapons he might be expected to use.

The amount of attention devoted to ensuring that recently arrived cavalymen knew how to properly fire their M-1 rifles strongly suggests that marksmanship was believed to be the most crucial skill for replacements to acquire. A supplement to the schedule outlined the activities of the 275 or so troopers who had reported to the regiment since 20 June. For training purposes, these men were considered new arrivals, even though several had fought in the Driniumor

campaign. Beginning on 24 August, they fell under the control of an ad hoc cadre formed from the unit's veterans that led them through marksmanship training. For about one week, the replacements were shielded from fatigue duty or any other activities that would have prevented them from attending this special instruction. For about four hours per day, the replacements progressed through three days of preparatory marksmanship and culminated with two days of firing on the standard 1,000-inch range. The plan also expressly indicated that this training would be conducted under the direct supervision of the squadron commanders, making clear to them that this was to be among their top priorities.<sup>25</sup>

Even with the move away from garrison back to the Driniumor, the 112th still found the time to continue individual and crew-served weapons training. On 6 September, work began on the construction of a 1,000-inch range near the regiment's position, and subordinate units started rotating through the improvised facility a few days later as patrol and guard duties allowed. Besides firing rifles and machine guns, the regiment reserved some training time for its 60-mm mortar crews, as well as the 37-mm gun sections of the anti-tank platoon, which practiced engaging moving targets. After it returned to Aitape, the 112th sustained the emphasis on building competence in this general area and throughout October continued to incorporate the employment and firing of individual and crew-served weapons into the schedule, adding the use of rocket launchers, flamethrowers, and demolitions to the set of items trained.<sup>26</sup> The attention paid to this last group of weapons perhaps reflected an effort by the 112th to comply with General Krueger's guidance regarding a new organization to be established throughout Sixth Army.

Recent SWPA operations at Wakde-Sarmi had convinced Krueger of the need for a quicker and less costly method of reducing strong Japanese field fortifications. To address this tactical problem, the general directed that each battalion and squadron-sized element in his

command form “assault parties” specifically trained and equipped to carry out the complex and dangerous task of knocking out mutually supporting enemy bunkers. Organized on a permanent basis, these detachments would consist of sixteen high-caliber men. Ten would be involved with carrying and employing a heavy-hitting core of special weapons – two rocket launchers, two flamethrowers, demolition charges, and a BAR. Supporting them would be four riflemen, armed with hand grenades and smoke grenades and trained well enough to use the flamethrower should the need arise. Under the control of a leader and assistant leader, assault parties would be held in reserve by the battalion or squadron commander and committed to the fight at his discretion. Krueger observed that, thus far, American units had dealt with the challenge of Japanese pillboxes by cobbling together a group of well-armed soldiers and hastily sending it forward. Believing that this approach resulted more often than not in sloppy assaults, the Sixth Army commander reasoned that establishing permanent teams (comparably equipped but cohesive and highly trained) would be a vast improvement over ad hoc detachments, making attacks against stubborn enemy defensive positions more responsive and better coordinated.<sup>27</sup>

The 112th received Krueger’s June directive too late to make any changes prior to the Driniumor battle but formed squadron assault parties as it began its period of recovery and training. Indeed, a 15 August memorandum providing details on how the regiment would meet Krueger’s intent established standards for the assault parties that exceeded those of Sixth Army. In its instructions to squadron commanders, the regiment fleshed out higher headquarters’ guidance by assigning ranks to each team member’s functional position. Assault parties of the 112th would be under the direction of a lieutenant, with a staff sergeant as his assistant and four more noncommissioned officers to lead the different components of the team. To Sixth Army’s prescribed organization, the cavalrymen added two troopers, each armed with a Thompson SMG – a weapon favored by the regiment’s senior leaders, who believed it would increase the

firepower of the assault party without compromising mobility. Individual members were to be capable of employing all of the assault party's weapons. The memorandum made clear that this was no "pushover" detail, and squadron commanders were instructed to limit their selections to personnel "who have demonstrated courage, technical proficiency in weapons, and outstanding performance of duty in combat."<sup>28</sup> Instituting the permanence Krueger desired from these special detachments, commanders were to pull the men they chose from the line troops and reassign them to their squadron headquarters element so that the unit would remain intact both in and out of combat. The transfers would occur around 25 August in accordance with the by-name list that each squadron was to provide to regiment.<sup>29</sup> The 112th's senior leadership seemed to accept with enthusiasm the concept of the assault party and had outlined a plan to attain proficiency in its employment.

How close reality corresponded to intent is uncertain. During the two-and-a-half weeks spent on the Driniumor outpost line, squadrons found time to drill their assault parties only about four times. Clearly, the regiment's assumption of patrol duty delayed the initial efforts to start this special training, but, by mid-September, the new outfits were organized and had begun to practice their special task.<sup>30</sup> The frequency – even if limited – seems to have been enough to satisfy the expectations of Miller, who observed a "good assault party demonstration" at 2d Squadron's headquarters on the 20th.<sup>31</sup> Although these teams remained intact, the regimental diary gives no further indication that they concentrated on the reduction of enemy bunkers until one month later on 19 October. During the following week, assault party training occurred four more times and included another demonstration for commanders and senior staff officers. However, much of this took place amid a tight four-hour-per-day schedule that consisted of a smorgasbord of events ranging from drill and demolitions to map reading and military courtesy.<sup>32</sup>

Returning from duty in the jungles east of Aitape on 21 September, the 112th soon resumed training but found the schedule of its first week in garrison dictated by higher headquarters. From the 24th to the 30th, the regiment practiced amphibious assaults under the scrutiny of a team of Army and Navy evaluators led by a lieutenant colonel presumably from SWPA. For two days, the regiment ran through loading and unloading procedures for both vehicles and personnel with one squadron concentrating on LCIs and high-speed destroyer-transports (called APDs) while its sister unit trained on a different type of vessel – the larger APAs (merchant ships converted into military transports). LSTs and LCTs carried the unit's heavy equipment. In the middle of this intense week, each squadron conducted a mock assault on the beach and then swapped places to execute the same sequence on the other amphibious craft. All told, the actions of these seven days comprised a well-resourced, effectively organized, and comprehensive training event. Although the evaluators identified several errors, they were quite complimentary overall, for the exercise seemed to reveal the expertise of the 112th's key leaders in this particular task. Many of them had performed it in combat, and some officers had attended within the past month an intra-theater school that addressed the subject. Indeed, the chief observer described the final landing operation in the regiment's after action review as "well-planned and well-performed" in spite of challenging surf conditions. "For the first time," he announced, naval officers associated with the training "had no complaints for the 112th Cavalry."<sup>33</sup> This praise notwithstanding, the precious week spent learning and relearning the technical aspects of amphibious warfare turned out to have only limited practical value. While it would transport its equipment by sea to future combat zones, the regiment never again conducted an assault on an unfriendly beach. Of course, no one in the unit knew this at the time. Having satisfied their potential critics, the troopers moved on to other tasks.

With the requirements of patrol duty and amphibious exercises occupying all of September, the 112th shifted its attention to honing other tactical skills during the next month. In doing so, veteran cavalrymen drew on not only their own experiences but also the recommendations of higher headquarters. For example, the War Department collected lessons learned in combat and periodically issued these to subordinate units. At least one of these compilations reached the 112th and made enough of an impression on Miller that he had his S-3 publish a training memorandum based on selected portions of the War Department document. Some suggestions, like the patently obvious “‘musts’ for the jungle soldier,” were at best a review for those troopers who had seen combat on Arawe or the Driniumor. Already familiar with the sights and sounds of the battlefield, they knew full well the importance of taking care of one’s equipment and moving quietly on patrol. Similarly, recommended techniques for organizing a platoon perimeter defense at night served only to reinforce what many of the veteran leaders had learned from prior campaigns. Other advice (while still essentially true) dripped with exaggeration and unnecessary bravado – particularly one comment from a Marine unit that had fought on Bougainville. It urged men to “appreciate the fact that the Japs do not have cat’s eyes; that they are afraid of the dark, and that at night a moving Jap is an easy victim for a silent Marine who believes in his bayonet.”<sup>34</sup> After surviving the fierce enemy charges along the Driniumor, most troopers probably felt more comfortable placing their faith in artillery concentrations and illumination rounds.

All the same, the document did contain helpful information that most likely addressed problems that the 112th had encountered but had yet to solve on its own. A brief account on the 60-mm mortar mentioned that this relatively new weapon could be employed without its heavy base plate and fired by hand, thus increasing its usefulness in actions where rapid movement was especially important. The report included expedient methods to ensure accurate aiming and

crewmember safety. A one-and-a-half page contribution from the I Marine Amphibious Corps provided a detailed description on how to reduce Japanese fortified positions with minimal casualties. The technique emphasized careful reconnaissance to identify the supporting emplacements and placing suppressive fire on these locations while an assault team speedily attacked the bunker. A marine armed with a rocket launcher closed to within fifty yards and engaged the target. Immediately afterward, two men rushed to the position, throwing smoke and incendiary grenades as they moved and rigging two twelve-pound blocks of TNT once they reached their goal. Once the five-second-delay fuse ignited the charges, the entire squad mopped up the bunker with grenades and bayonets. Given the amount of coordination required to successfully execute the task, it was no surprise that the document stressed the need for rehearsals.<sup>35</sup> Finding themselves in the process of adopting a new organization to carry out the same mission, the leaders of the 112th probably noted this recommendation with interest.

The effectiveness of lessons like these – learned apart from the regiment's own experience and passed down by higher headquarters – is uncertain. Nonetheless, while it is difficult to identify specific links between borrowed lessons learned and their impact on training and combat performance, it seems safe to say that the 112th gleaned what it could from the available sources and used the information as a general guide. At the end of the regimental training memorandum described above, Miller included something of a disclaimer in stating that the suggestions mentioned did “not necessarily represent the carefully considered views of the War Department” but added that, as “actual experiences in combat,” they did “merit careful reading.”<sup>36</sup> Implicit here was a call to examine the so-called lessons of others with the aid of one's own understanding and to assess their value before casually dismissing or thoughtlessly applying them. Recalling the 112th's use of the periodic observer reports the unit received from Army Ground Forces, RCT executive officer Lieutenant Colonel Philip Hooper described them



as “helpful” not just due to the ideas they provided but because they “served to stimulate our own conclusions from . . . firsthand experience.”<sup>37</sup> Hooper recalled that Clyde Grant, the 1st Squadron commander, was “particularly adept” at filtering through AGF observer reports, determining the context of the lessons they related, and deciding what recommendations made sense based on the 112th’s unique strengths and weaknesses.<sup>38</sup> For example, the cavalry regiment’s eight-man rifle squads could not simply replicate successful battle drills carried out by their twelve-man counterparts in infantry units.

Apart from the War Department and AGF, Sixth Army had its own set of plans and proposals for the 112th as the troopers prepared for the next campaign. Orders to assume outpost duty east of Aitape, conduct amphibious training, and establish squadron assault parties all originated at higher headquarters, and, as the regiment headed into October, it continued to implement Krueger’s guidance. Just as the general’s concern over an organizational shortcoming lay behind his instructions regarding the formation of assault parties, his dissatisfaction with soldiers’ combat area sketching led to another Sixth Army memorandum – albeit one that was suggestive rather than directive in nature. Krueger identified inaccurate reporting of unit positions as a common error and believed that the problem stemmed from the lack of maps in theater (indeed, many areas had simply not been mapped at all). To offset the effects of this shortage, Sixth Army provided maps based almost exclusively on aerial photographs, but these visual aids had their own flaws because, as the general explained, “the thick jungle growth hides nearly all trails, small streams, villages, and other distinctive features of terrain.”<sup>39</sup> Sketching would remedy this shortcoming in aerial photographs because ground units could fill in the hidden topographical details and generate a product to facilitate their continued operations in an area. According to Krueger though, modern mapping methods had made sketching a lost art. Thus, to improve the tactical proficiency of his subordinate elements –

particularly in the tasks of land navigation and determining unit location – the Sixth Army commander encouraged leaders to find ways to restore the skills necessary for producing correct and complete graphic representations of the terrain over which they operated. Moreover, he saw added value to this process since “no method can compete with sketching for teaching officers and NCOs a rapid and accurate appreciation of terrain.”<sup>40</sup>

The training in combat sketching that the 112th conducted from 9 to 13 October in response to Krueger’s observations illustrated much more than its senior leaders’ ability to take a hint. Miller apparently needed little more than a recommendation to convince him that such training would be worthwhile, for the regiment’s own experience in recent operations had revealed “the inaccuracy of sketches and the inability of troops to orient their location.”<sup>41</sup> The colonel brought the issue to the forefront by having his S-3 reproduce Sixth Army’s 3 August memorandum and using it as further justification for the time and resources he planned to commit to the event. Under the direction of its S-2, each squadron was to run a sketching school for five days. For the first two days, attendees would practice determining direction and distance on a map as well as on the ground and would learn more advanced map reading skills to assist in orienting themselves to the terrain. They would also receive training on how to draw a sketch following the steps outlined in a special worksheet prepared by the regimental staff and on the process of consolidating small unit sketches into a “central control sketch” that covered a more expansive area. After a field exercise on the third day, students were to pair up and complete a sketch to be graded by the instructor and then turned in to the regimental S-3 for review. About twenty men per squadron plus another twenty-three in Weapons and Headquarters Troops were slated to go through the course.<sup>42</sup> As a response to Krueger’s suggestion, the senior leaders of the 112th indicated that they shared the Sixth Army commander’s assessment and had instituted a unit school to help correct this tactical deficiency.

For much of October, the cavalrymen were engaged in a variety of activities intended to get them ready for the mission that would send them once again into battle against the Japanese. The regiment went about this, however, at a somewhat leisurely pace, still limiting formally scheduled training to four hours per day to provide the men with sufficient time for rest and recreation. Nevertheless, the time spent in training, while almost certainly not frantic, must have been intense. Besides basic tasks like weapons firing and marksmanship, the unit added a mixture of tactical skills designed to build upon what it had learned in recent combat. Thus, the regimental diary's October entries mention stream-crossings, erecting wire obstacles, approach march and attack formations, and scouting techniques as part of a smattering of activities that filled up the unit's half-day schedule along with the schools and weapons and assault party training noted previously. The 112th's medical detachment assisted by teaching classes one week on the prevention and control of skin disease and by providing instruction on the treatment of casualties caused by a gas attack. The latter event preceded squadron training on the defensive measures required should such a contingency occur. Doctors and medics also performed physical examinations and dental surveys on the cavalrymen as they geared up for the next campaign. All the while, squadrons continued the routine of road marches and dismounted drill, conducting these unexciting tasks every couple of days.<sup>43</sup>

The monotony was alleviated partially by recreational activities. There were, of course, organized athletics nearly every afternoon and movies two or three times per week. However, this form of amusement sometimes came with a price – one night troopers had to sit through a training film on how to identify friendly and enemy aircraft before they could enjoy the main feature. The 43d Infantry Division band put on a concert one October evening, as did Bob Hope and his entourage on another occasion. According to one troop commander, the men particularly appreciated Hope's visit and laughed heartily as the entertainer joked about the myriad ways that

GIs said the word “Aitape” – a location that had been their home for weeks but one which still somehow dodged a definitive pronunciation.<sup>44</sup>

As the regiment entered its last month at the airdrome, Sixth Army added one more major task – organizational restructuring – to the cluttered schedule of training and recreational activities. On 1 October, an order from higher headquarters formally activated a unit that had existed more or less in a de facto status since the Arawe operation. Now officially under Cunningham’s command, the “new” 112th RCT consisted of a fifty-man headquarters section, Miller’s cavalry regiment, the 148th Field Artillery Battalion, and the 3296th Signal Service Platoon. The change to the unit’s structure raised the authorized personnel strength of the regiment from 1,650 to 2,008, but the outfit still paled in comparison to infantry organizations, whose regiments were allowed 3,120 men. Conspicuously absent from Miller’s crew was a cannon company equipped with self-propelled 105-mm guns, weapons that infantry units employed effectively in the direct-fire mode.

More importantly, the same order dictated a change to the unit’s table of organization and equipment (TO&E). Since April 1942, the regiment had been comprised of two rifle squadrons and separate headquarters, service, and weapons troops. Despite some modifications (most notably, the removal of horses but also the addition of new weapons, like the Thompson SMG and the 60-mm mortar), the basic formation had remained the same until the 1 October directive broke the mold substantially. It called for the establishment of one heavy weapons troop in each squadron and created slots for extra communications personnel in the regimental and squadron headquarters elements, adjustments that increased the 112th’s authorized strength to the level indicated above. Miller and his staff devoted much of their time during the first week of October to creating the new D and H troops from scratch, a task that required shuffling around leaders, soldiers, and equipment and recalculating and prioritizing shortfalls in each of

those areas.<sup>45</sup> Although augmenting the rifle squadrons' firepower may have been a welcome modification, it did not change the fact that it involved a great deal of effort on the part of unit leaders and no doubt injected some unwanted instability. Overlaid atop this dizzying reorganization, gross personnel shortages made matters even worse.

Sensing that the 112th's deployment to a combat zone was drawing nearer, Miller grew increasingly concerned about the relative scarcity of soldiers on his unit rolls. On 6 October, he sent his S-2 on a trip back to the base at Finschhafen to check on the status of replacements and to round up any cavalymen who had arrived in theater and were waiting for assignments. The staff officer returned the next day, unsuccessful in his mission. A week later, the colonel commandeered the Piper Cub belonging to the regiment's supporting artillery battalion and had the pilot fly him the short distance up the coast to Hollandia for a day. Stopping in to chat with old acquaintances at the various headquarters, Miller paid a special visit to Sixth Army to "make plain . . . our difficulties in getting replacements, our understrength, and hence our non-readiness for combat duty."<sup>46</sup> Fighting their own battle with SWPA over the same issue, Krueger's staff could promise nothing concrete in the near term. Nevertheless, almost two weeks later, the 112th received word that a number of new troopers would be reporting the following day, and a detail worked hastily to pitch extra tents in anticipation of their arrival. Such news was too good to be true. In terms of replacement personnel, the best the regiment could do prior to its departure from New Guinea was the transfer of five lieutenants from the neighboring 43d Infantry Division.<sup>47</sup> The acute shortage of soldiers in the 112th would not be alleviated until the unit was on Leyte. Then, the integration of untrained replacements on the verge of combat would present problems of their own.

The notification for the regiment's next deployment came with little advanced warning and hardly any response time. Cunningham and Hooper reported back from furlough on 16

October, and both flew to Sixth Army headquarters in Hollandia a few days later. While there, the two apparently learned nothing specific to tip them off about their impending departure from Aitape because, when they returned, the 112th for the most part continued its normal routine. On 23 October, the RCT issued updated training guidance that echoed the themes outlined in the similar document published in August. Subordinate units were to improve their tactical proficiency in a sequential manner, building up from small unit tasks – like patrolling and weapons training – to a coordinated live fire exercise involving cavalymen and their supporting artillery. On the surface, it seemed to be business as usual for the organization.

Still, all were aware that the 112th would fight in another campaign eventually. Although no one knew exactly when the order to leave would come or where it would send them, some signs suggested that the RCT's days at the airdrome were winding down. The training memorandum contained the caveat that the guidance would be followed “as the tactical situation permitted.”<sup>48</sup> Moreover, a 26 October directive brought an end to the mild work schedule. For the first time since the conclusion of the Driniumor campaign in mid-August, the unit began to follow an eight-hour training day. Perhaps to implement this change, the 112th's commanders met on 27 October – a Friday – to discuss the next week's training. It is likely that no explicit information about the imminent deployment was discussed. Not until Monday, after a normal weekend of inspections and rest periods, did leaders hear that they would be leaving Aitape.<sup>49</sup> The regiment's scheduled departure was much sooner than anyone expected or even considered possible.

“Short notice!” an astounded Miller penned in his journal some time following the briefing he received at RCT headquarters on the evening of 30 October.<sup>50</sup> The 112th had one day to break camp and load a portion of its personnel and equipment before sailing out of Aitape on 1 November for an undisclosed destination. Preparations to depart began early the next

morning, but the pace quickened after leaders learned that the deadline for the load-out had been shifted forward to 2300 so that the vessels could leave at midnight. This news came as a rude shock to the cavalrymen, whose original schedule seemed challenging enough to meet even before compressing it. According to Miller, the unit responded well to the added stress, “stepped up the job and got it done, but it *was* a job.”<sup>51</sup> The troopship left port on time that night. It was not until the next morning that the 112th’s senior officers learned for sure where they were going. After the transport arrived at Hollandia to refuel, Cunningham and Miller visited Sixth Army headquarters and discovered that the RCT was en route to Leyte.<sup>52</sup>

In August 1944, the 112th’s leaders had considered their recent campaign on the Driniumor and, based on that experience, outlined a training plan covering a sweeping array of skills deemed essential for effectively fighting the Japanese. Not long after formulating this comprehensive scheme though, the unit deployed back to the jungle, where it pulled outpost duty in fulfillment of a higher headquarters tasking. While carrying out this primary mission, the cavalrymen conducted training when they could – principally in the fundamental area of weapons proficiency but also in more specialized tasks, like assault party battle drill. Senior leaders also took advantage of the opportunity to send officers and men to schools outside of the regiment, recognizing the long-term benefits such training provided to the unit as a whole. At the end of September, the 112th returned to the garrison conditions of Aitape and participated in an extended amphibious warfare exercise before spending their remaining weeks on New Guinea engaged in an assortment of training activities crammed, for the most part, into a four-hour work day. Given the ambitious agenda that senior leaders developed in mid-August, it seems clear that their expectations had far surpassed what the regiment actually accomplished when the time came for it to leave Aitape and make its way to the battlefields of Leyte.

The 17 August memorandum described a three-phase program that was designed to serve as a framework for the RCT's training effort from 21 August to 15 October. In light of these intentions, what did the organization accomplish during this period? It is no stretch to say that the unit executed a large portion of the training activities slated for the relatively undemanding initial phase, centering on individual skills and recreation. The same assertion could be made regarding much of phase two – even with its broad spectrum of tasks. However, the 112th undoubtedly failed to achieve some of the training program's more crucial objectives. For one, the squad, platoon, and troop field exercises that were intended to take place during phase two did not occur. As for phase three, conducting the combined arms training at squadron and RCT-level proved to be nothing more than a vain hope.

A few key factors help to explain the difference between the regiment's expectations for training and what it actually experienced during its brief respite from major combat. Time was the principal problem. The 112th had anticipated that it would have six uninterrupted weeks to refit and train its subordinate units and apparently had not counted on departing so soon for the Driniumor to carry out patrol duty for an extended period. The unit did manage to practice certain skills as it guarded the outpost line, and prudent squad leaders probably took advantage of the opportunity to familiarize their men with the jungle and the small-unit tactics required to function effectively in that unforgiving environment. Nonetheless, the situation did not conveniently lend itself to conducting well-planned and carefully considered platoon and troop-level collective training. The 112th returned to the Aitape garrison on 21 September, just three days before the unit-training phase was scheduled to end. With the notable exception of the field exercises, the regiment practiced many of the phase-two tasks, but it did this during what was supposed to have been phase three.



The burden of having to reorganize the unit in accordance with a new TO&E made any chance that the 112th would undertake a squadron or regimental-sized training event in October even more remote. Besides, a disquieting lack of personnel most likely lessened the inclination of some leaders to expend a great deal of effort in the training of units with so many unfilled positions. Given the multiple reasons suggesting otherwise, it clearly would have taken intensive planning and almost heroic resolve for the RCT's senior leadership to conduct a large-scale combined arms exercise in the time they had available. In this regard, the absence of the strong-willed Cunningham and his executive officer during much of this period – though not decisive – probably did not help.

It may have been just as well that a combination of several obstacles derailed the RCT's plan for unit training. As the weeks following the fight on the Driniumor passed by and the time to move on to the next challenge drew inevitably nearer, senior leaders seemed to be in no hurry to accelerate the tempo of daily activities in garrison. Instead, they clung to a four-hour schedule until a directive from higher headquarters forced a change to this policy only days before the regiment's deployment to Leyte. In the midst of recovering from a grueling campaign and expecting future missions to be no less strenuous, officers perhaps came to believe that the best preparation for their units would come not by pushing them to the limit in collective training in the field but by administering the gentle remedy of rest and recreation.

Sizable blocks of leisure time and low-stress activity most likely remained on the schedule because they addressed a more immediate and growing concern – sustaining unit morale. Looking back on the RCT's stay at Aitape, Hooper recalled “a disturbing negative attitude” that had begun to surface among the cavalrymen. Many veterans had been overseas for well over two years and had suffered weight loss and general fatigue. Moreover, the chances were quite high that, of those troopers who had been assigned to the 112th since Woodlark, few

had seen any American women – nurses or otherwise – except for glimpses they might have caught during one or two USO shows. According to Hooper, this combination of factors had a “marked depressing effect” on the unit as it geared up for Leyte.<sup>53</sup> Rather than run the risk of overdoing it through rigorous field exercises in the jungle, senior leaders may have quietly set aside the ambitious goals of the 17 August memorandum and settled for a less demanding program that aligned more realistically with what their men could physically and psychologically handle. With regard to training, the effort that the 112th could afford to expend was perhaps much closer to what the constraints allowed than to what its commanders initially believed could be accomplished.

Thus, to the extent that it could, the regiment trained in a manner that reflected the lessons learned in its most recent campaign. However, this generalization applies more precisely to individual soldiers than it does to troops and squadrons. As it did after Arawe, the 112th devoted careful attention to certain fundamental tasks, like patrolling, weapons familiarization, and rifle marksmanship – the last for new arrivals in particular. Though no doubt a response to Sixth Army guidance, the emphasis on sketching probably resulted just as much from the regiment’s experience with inaccurate maps and the confusion these generated in the chaotic gunfights along the Driniumor.

Nonetheless, because of the lack of collective and combined arms training at Aitape, many of the more important lessons appear to have made it not much further than the after action report. For example, nearly isolated and fighting for its life in the jungle, the 112th had learned valuable lessons on the finer points of aerial resupply and the application of field artillery fire in the defense, yet these skills were not sustained during the designated recovery period. Although mortar crews trained in September and October and shot live rounds occasionally, there was no productive effort made to employ indirect fires of any kind in a coordinated exercise with ground

forces. This shortfall in training persisted despite past reminders that successful offensive operations against well-concealed enemy positions required first that they be pinned down – preferably by artillery support. While several complaints about the dangerous inconvenience of moving at night found their way into the after action report, units conducted no night training at Aitape to mitigate the extensive difficulties associated with this sometimes necessary task. Finally, although radio communication problems during the recent campaign may have been reduced partially by unit schools and the integration of more skilled personnel, no events tested long-range communications (as the planned command post exercises surely would have) except perhaps for the closely monitored amphibious warfare training.

Many of these shortcomings – as well as several other collective tasks – would have been addressed during the troop, squadron, and RCT field exercises slated for phases two and three of the training program. The 112th almost certainly had good reasons for not completing these crucial phases. It is safe to say, however, that the cavalymen departed for their next assignment having learned the lessons of the Driniumor yet deficient in the practice of applying them. In any case, Leyte would prove to be quite a different “schoolhouse,” complete with different lessons.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> S-4 Journal (Aitape), 48-49, RG 407, NA.

<sup>2</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 1, 17 August 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid.

<sup>5</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 3-20 October 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Schedule and Supplement No. 1, 21 August-2 September 1944, S-3 Annex; HQ, 112th Cavalry, General Orders No. 14 (15 August 1944); HQ, 112th Cavalry, Bulletin No. 117 (22 August 1944) and No. 118 (23 August 1944); all in Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>6</sup> Paul Fussell, *Wartime: Understanding and Behavior in the Second World War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 80-82.

<sup>7</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Schedule and Supplement No. 1, 21 August-2 September 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 1, 17 August 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> S-4 Journal (Aitape), 49-62, RG 407, NA.

<sup>9</sup> Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 49, 141. Drea notes that the average assigned strength of the six line troops had decreased to 66 percent by the time the campaign ended.

<sup>10</sup> S-1 Journal (Aitape), 6-7, 9, RG 407, NA.

<sup>11</sup> Twelve hundred is a generous estimate. On 31 October, 942 men from the 112th Cavalry Regiment departed Aitape. There was a detachment of troopers that followed later, but it is unlikely that its strength numbered over two hundred. “Regimental Diary,” 31 October 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*, 7, 9; Miller Journal, 6 September, 16 October 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>13</sup> S-4 Journal (Aitape), c, RG 407, NA.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 52-62; HQ, 112th Cavalry, General Orders No. 15, “Awards of Combat Infantryman Badge,” 17 August 1944, S-1 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 14-20 August 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>15</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Schedule and Supplement No. 1, 21 August-2 September 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>16</sup> Beggs, “Recollections,” Dunlap Collection.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>18</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 1-21 September 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., 21 September 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>21</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 1, 17 August 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>22</sup> Miller Journal, 3-21 September 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>23</sup> "Regimental Diary," 27 August-23 October 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>24</sup> Beggs, "Recollections," Dunlap Collection.

<sup>25</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Schedule and Supplement No. 1, 21 August-2 September 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>26</sup> "Regimental Diary," 6 September-27 October 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>27</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, Training Memorandum No. 18, 22 June 1944; HQ, Sixth Army, "Combat Notes," vol. 2, 15 July 1944, 17-19; both in 106-3.01, Box 2450, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>28</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 15, "Squadron Assault Parties," 15 August 1944, S-3 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18082, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

<sup>30</sup> "Regimental Diary," 11-19 September 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>31</sup> Miller Journal, 20 September 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>32</sup> "Regimental Diary," 19-27 October 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>33</sup> "Notes Taken from Officers in Charge of Amphibious Training at Critique Held 30 September 1944," n.d., Amphibious Training Notes, CAVR-112-3.13, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; "Regimental Diary," 24-30 September 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 20, 9 October 1944, 3-4, Training Memorandums [*sic*], CAVR-112-3.13, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 1-2.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 4.

<sup>37</sup> Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> HQ, Alamo Force, "Training in Sketching," 3 August 1944, reproduced by HQ, 112th Cavalry on 6 October 1944, Training Memorandums [*sic*], CAVR-112-3.13, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>40</sup> Ibid.

<sup>41</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 19, 6 October 1944, Training Memorandums [*sic*], CAVR-112-3.13, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>42</sup> Ibid.

<sup>43</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 1-27 October 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.; Fyke, “Memoirs,” 22, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>45</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, “Historical Report,” 30 December 1944, 1, Historical Report, 16 November-30 December 1944, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18083, Entry 427 [hereafter “Historical Report (Leyte)”], RG 407, NA. For the 112th’s authorized strength under this TO&E, see “Strength of Command by Unit or Detachment, 22 November 1944” in the S-1 Annex of the same historical report. U.S. War Department, *Table of Organization, No. 2-11*, Dunlap Collection; Miller Journal, 2-8 October 1944, *ibid.* For the authorized strength of an infantry regiment, see Drea, *Defending the Driniumor*, 55. See Cannon, *Leyte*, 249, for an assessment of the regimental cannon company’s weapons.

<sup>46</sup> Miller Journal, 6, 12-13 October 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>47</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 23 October 1944, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 29 October 1944, Dunlap Collection. For a brief description of Sixth Army’s difficulty acquiring replacements in 1944, see Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon*, 76-77.

<sup>48</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, Training Memorandum No. 2, 23 October 1944, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18083, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 16, 20 October 1944, Dunlap Collection. On the day Cunningham and Hooper visited Hollandia, Sixth Army’s main landings on Leyte were getting underway. HQ, Sixth Army, “Report of the Leyte Operation, 17 October 1944 - 25 December 1944,” 3, 106-0.3, Box 2400, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>49</sup> Miller Journal, 26 October 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 30 October 1944, Dunlap Collection; “Regimental Diary,” 27-30 October 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>51</sup> Miller Journal, 31 October 1944, Dunlap Collection (emphasis is Miller’s); “Regimental Diary,” 31 October 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>52</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 31 October 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 1, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 1 November 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>53</sup> Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, Dunlap Collection.

## CHAPTER VI

### “A TERRIBLY HARD CAMPAIGN”

In January 1945, a trooper of the 112th writing from Leyte grumbled in a note to home that “every bone in his body ached continuously.” Compelled by a sense of parental duty, his father forwarded this complaint to the Sixth U.S. Army commander and expressed his fear that keeping soldiers in the tropics for “too long . . . will injure their health permanently, and . . . make mental cases out of a large percentage” of them.<sup>1</sup> Although General Walter Krueger brushed aside this admonishment with a polite letter, there was no doubt that the Leyte operation came with a cost. For the GIs who endured it, the ordeal meant jagged landscapes, ankle-deep mud, frequent rains, perpetual wetness, and the disagreeable chore of eating, sleeping, marching, and fighting amid those conditions.

For the 112th as a unit, the campaign revealed the limitations of experience and the cost of inadequate training. Despite its years of overseas service and its exposure to combat on New Britain and New Guinea, the regiment proved slow to exhibit the skills essential to successful offensive operations, especially when it came to attacking prepared positions. On Leyte, progress – if it came at all – came in the form of survival or accumulated experience, not necessarily in the manifestation of improved combat performance. The challenges unique to the operation and shared by much of Sixth Army made the test only more difficult. As Lieutenant Colonel Philip Hooper simply stated, it was “a terribly hard campaign.”<sup>2</sup>

As though in compensation for their frenetic departure from Aitape, the cavalymen of the 112th enjoyed a surprisingly comfortable voyage aboard the *Frederick Funston*. Leaving shortly after midnight on 1 November, the U.S. Navy troopship sailed along the New Guinea coast through the early morning hours and arrived at the large SWPA base at Hollandia. While

the vessel refueled, Cunningham and Miller went ashore to visit Krueger's rear echelon headquarters. There, they received confirmation that the RCT was en route to Leyte, where it would join Sixth Army and most likely begin staging for a follow-on operation. The ever-needing question of replacements was partially answered when Miller got "rather vague information" about some six hundred men who would report to the regiment around the middle of the month. Although this would fill the unit's ranks, the quality of these inexperienced troopers was as yet unknown. Given time to train on Leyte however, it was believed that the most egregious shortfalls could be corrected in short order. In any case, Miller finally had something of a promise from higher headquarters to make good the losses sustained almost three months before during the Driniumor campaign.<sup>3</sup>

Taking its place in a larger convoy, the *Funston* left Hollandia the next day and set course for the small island of Morotai, a recent Sixth Army conquest approximately three hundred miles northwest of the Vogelkop Peninsula. At sea, the cavalrymen ran through the usual program of evacuation drills and killed time with weapons training and inspections. For those GIs still uncertain as to where the RCT was headed, senior leaders provided a clue to the mystery by scheduling an orientation lecture on the Philippines.<sup>4</sup> The convoy anchored on the morning of 4 November and tarried at Morotai for nearly a week. Onerous duty hauling supplies back and forth along the beach restricted the opportunities for serious training, but Cunningham managed to find time for a two-hour unit road march before the RCT resumed its journey. Amid final equipment inspections on the *Funston*, two lieutenants taught a class on Japanese culture. How relevant the troopers found this introduction to the customs and mannerisms of the enemy soldiers they were on their way to kill is unclear. If some cavalrymen began to entertain positive impressions of the opponent, a lone Japanese pilot who attacked the convoy on the 13th probably dispelled them. Poor aim made this nothing more than harassment, which, in any case,



constituted the 112th's unofficial welcome to the Philippines. On the following morning, the *Funston's* passengers peered into the dawn and saw Leyte on the horizon.<sup>5</sup>

Leyte lies north of Mindanao and south of Luzon and Samar. Over one hundred miles long from north to south and varying in width from forty miles at each end to fifteen miles across its narrow midsection, the island is among the largest of the archipelago and has a shape some have described as a distorted hourglass or a large molar tooth.<sup>6</sup> A thickly forested mountain range comprised of sharp ridges and ravines splits the island down the center. While this rough terrain covers much of southern Leyte, the high ground in the northern half tapers off into coastal plains on either side – the low, marshy Ormoc Valley in the west and the fertile Leyte Valley in the east. Where the Leyte Valley meets the island's northern coast lays the town of Carigara, the starting point for the 112th's combat operations. The RCT spent much of its time advancing toward Ormoc, a modest port some twenty-five miles south over the Cordillera Mountains. In 1944, approximately one million people inhabited Leyte. Most lived in its northern half, dispersed among numerous villages and towns connected by unpaved roads poorly suited for heavy military traffic.<sup>7</sup>

The liberation of the Philippines began on 17 October as the 112th rested in the safety of its Aitape base camp. Viewed as the next major SWPA operation after the advance up the New Guinea coast, the Leyte invasion was originally scheduled for 20 December, but the JCS dramatically modified the timeline following a reassessment of Japanese vulnerabilities in the central Philippines.<sup>8</sup> Taking the accelerated attack order in stride, Sixth Army assaulted the eastern shore of the island with two corps abreast. Pushing inland under the aerial cover of carrier planes from the Third and Seventh U.S. Fleets, General Krueger's formations met mixed resistance but made encouraging progress in the first days of the invasion. XXIV Corps occupied the southern half of the Leyte Valley and cleared the way for engineers to begin the

construction of airdromes intended to support future operations. Further north, the two divisions of X Corps converged on Carigara. They entered the town on 2 November only to find that the Japanese defenders had withdrawn southwest toward the rugged, heavily forested mountains of north central Leyte.<sup>9</sup>

Krueger planned to maintain the pressure with X Corps dashing south to seize Ormoc, but many factors worked against the hope of a quick victory. Chief among these was Tokyo's resolve to inflict the highest cost on U.S. forces in the fight for the central Philippines. In the weeks that followed the invasion, the Japanese managed to land over thirty-five thousand reinforcements on Leyte and committed additional aerial units to the island's defense.<sup>10</sup> These actions ensured that Sixth Army's drive through the Cordilleras gateway to the Ormoc Valley would be grimly contested and without close air support. Delays in airfield construction brought on by heavy precipitation and poor drainage in the Leyte Valley made matters worse. The monsoons also turned the roads into muddy quagmires, saddling the Americans with a logistical burden that impeded the advance even further. Finally, SWPA's G-2 had mentioned the possibility of a seaborne assault directed against Carigara, and Krueger determined that ignoring this threat to X Corps' rear entailed too much risk. He thus postponed the pursuit into the Cordilleras to allow for the preparation of coastal defenses. Not until 7 November did the 24th Infantry Division launch its assault down Highway 2, the road that ran ten miles west beyond Carigara before turning south into the mountains toward Ormoc. First Cavalry Division covered the 24th's left flank. Over the next week, both units made only limited progress against a tenacious enemy that had been afforded the time to dig-in amid the thick tangle of ridges and ravines.

Even before the operation began, Krueger had demanded additional forces, and, in mid-November, this clamoring finally paid off. The 32d Infantry Division landed on Leyte and

proceeded to relieve the exhausted 24th. For its part, the 1st Cavalry stayed at the front but gained an extra RCT when Sixth Army attached the 112th to the division.<sup>11</sup> Though they missed the opening stages of the invasion, the troopers joined the stalled X Corps as it struggled to secure the upper hand in the mountains north of Ormoc Valley. The regiment thus arrived in plenty of time to experience the worst of the campaign. Indeed, many of its veterans found that, in terms of its harshness, the fighting rivaled combat in New Guinea.

The 112th came ashore the morning of 14 November ten miles south of Tacloban. Amid the expected bustle that accompanied any landing, Lieutenant Colonel Clyde Grant oversaw 1st Squadron as it prepared for action but also cast his eyes on two unusual sights: an old Filipino church and the dour Sixth Army commander watching his long-awaited reinforcements scramble onto the beach. The former struck Grant as the first sign of indigenous “civilization” he had observed since his furlough in Australia.<sup>12</sup> Although the significance may have escaped him at the time, the thousands of people who attended churches like the one he had seen would affect the regiment’s military efforts in the Philippines to a large extent, much more in any case, than had the natives of New Britain and New Guinea. Moreover, Krueger’s presence reminded those perceptive enough to notice that this was a big fight they were joining – Sixth Army’s biggest yet. This too would have a marked impact on the 112th’s operations on Leyte and, later, Luzon.

Sorting their way through the chaos, the troopers married up with their equipment and immediately began to move closer to the front. Assigning a portion of his regiment to unload the landing craft, Miller sent the remainder by truck in the direction of Carigara some thirty-five miles away. He arose after a night on the beach and headed with Grant to the 1st Cavalry Division headquarters, where they found Cunningham waiting for them. It was decided that Grant’s squadron would continue its journey north and west to relieve elements of the 1st Cavalry. In the meantime, 2d Squadron under Lieutenant Colonel D. M. McMains would handle

what remained of staging operations on the beach before following a day or so later. In the early afternoon of 17 November, Troops A and B completed the relief of the 7th Cavalry Regiment around Carigara and got ready to assume the offensive into the mountains to the southwest. 1st Squadron's Troop C was designated the RCT reserve and remained in the town, where the CPs of Cunningham and Miller fell under its protection. The bulk of 2d Squadron set up its base camp three miles away at Barugo. Due to a lack of trucks, Troop F lagged behind its parent unit some seven miles to east at San Miguel.<sup>13</sup>

On its way to the front, the RCT had taken charge of the long-expected six hundred replacements. As desperate as Miller was to fill the vacancies in his ranks, the haphazard manner in which the new soldiers arrived should have come as no surprise. Personnel replenishment in 1st Squadron occurred almost on the move, with the S-1 feeding men into subordinate troops as they marched out of assembly areas. Suspecting that several newcomers had never fired an M-1 rifle, Grant organized a hasty training session in basic marksmanship before his squadron headed into the mountains.<sup>14</sup> Recalling that the bulk of the regiment's replacements came from a deactivated tank destroyer battalion, Captain Frank Fyke saw the situation in a more positive light. Despite their inexperience, the fifty or sixty that his troop received were still soldiers and would be able "to adjust to Infantry ways" with the help of veterans in the ranks.<sup>15</sup> In any case, this influx of personnel brought the total assigned personnel of the RCT (including its signal and field artillery components) to 137 officers and 2,305 enlisted men out of an authorized strength of 153 and 2,474, respectively. Miller's cavalry regiment absorbed most of the shortfall. The RCT headquarters of fifty-five personnel happened to exceed its authorized allocation.<sup>16</sup>

Cunningham's initial orders from the 1st Cavalry Division had the RCT looking rearward even as it prepared for a major fight with Japanese units entrenched in the Cordillera

Mountains.<sup>17</sup> In support of the X Corps attack into the Ormoc Valley, the 112th assumed a sector of front roughly one mile in width between the 1st Cavalry Division on its left flank and the 24th Infantry Division (later replaced by the 32d) on its right. The RCT's mission was to clear the area of enemy forces, focusing its efforts initially on Mount Minoro, four miles southwest of Carigara. Cunningham also had responsibility for the beach defenses east and west of this town and for the section of the corps line of communication running along a twenty-mile stretch of unimproved road from the village of Capooacan on the coast to Cavite, deep in the Leyte Valley. The RCT had special instructions to guard all bridges and to maintain at least one rifle platoon at each of the two pontoon bridges emplaced between Capooacan and Carigara. In addition to manning these stationary outposts, the 112th was ordered to conduct frequent patrols along the route and to cooperate with Filipino guerrillas operating in sector. Assisting the RCT with this wide-ranging mission was an infantry company from the 24th Infantry Division, a squadron from the 1st Cavalry, and a detachment from the 44th Tank Battalion. Besides the 148th Field Artillery in direct support, the RCT could draw upon the firepower of the other howitzer battalions assigned to the 1st Cavalry Division.

At the outset, the 112th RCT commander assigned the preponderance of his available units to the rear area security mission. A Japanese assault from Carigara Bay remained a possibility, and intelligence reports indicated that the enemy would soon counterattack out of the Cordilleras to interdict the main supply route connecting the bases in Leyte Valley with the front. As a result of these concerns, 2d Squadron found itself – by 20 November – manning Carigara's beach defenses, guarding key bridges near the town, and patrolling the line of communications around Barugo and San Miguel. Portions of the 112th's weapons troop and anti-tank platoon helped share the burden of execution, as did the 2d Squadron of the 1st Cavalry Division's 7th Regiment.<sup>18</sup>

Although the serious threats feared by higher headquarters never materialized, the presence of civilians in the rear area came with its own set of challenges. Enemy contact was infrequent, and Filipinos seemed quite eager to assist with the task of rooting out the Japanese remaining in the area. However, the cavalrymen's generally positive impression of the natives became somewhat tempered by suspicion as patrols responding to civilian reports of Japanese activity found no trace of the enemy. The numerous "exaggerated and rumor-founded reports" emanating from the population troubled Cunningham so much that they prompted him to request the support of the Counterintelligence Corps in order to determine the sources and motives behind what on the surface appeared to be a deliberate effort to harass and distract American forces.<sup>19</sup>

As most of the RCT provided security for the rear area, Clyde Grant's unit moved southwest into the Cordilleras. Alerted by reports of enemy sightings on both flanks of the squadron, patrols skirted the rugged slopes along either side of Mount Minoro on 18 November. That evening, a platoon from Troop A occupied its peak and defended this key terrain the following morning against a desultory Japanese assault. Meanwhile, elements of the squadron continued to clear the Minoro area but made slow progress over the next couple of days despite meeting almost no enemy resistance.

There were good reasons for this sluggish advance. For one, the cavalrymen were leaving the level or rolling terrain of the coastal region and striking out into an unwelcoming hodgepodge of sharp ridges, narrow draws, and dense vegetation. Thus, the harsh landscape not only sapped the energy of men as they traversed it but also limited their visibility. Moreover, the first heavy rains hit the 112th late on 19 November, marking the start of a downpour that persisted without let-up for well over twenty-four hours. In this rough terrain shrouded by fog and precipitation, units facing the prospect of enemy contact advanced rather deliberately. When

possible, troop commanders placed their weapons platoons in overwatch positions so that their other subordinates had more protection as they bounded forward. This arrangement served a more useful (if unexpected) purpose as well. Invariably, a patrol lost its way, and, when it did, it became common practice for the leader to throw a smoke grenade to mark his location. Observing this signal, the weapons platoon then re-directed the patrol by radio to get it back on course. Inaccurate maps (for the few who had maps at all) made improvisations like these even more widespread.<sup>20</sup>

The loosely connected front added to the confusion and thus reinforced cautious tendencies as 1st Squadron felt their way beyond Mount Minoro toward the small village of Sinayawan, a mile to the west. Advancing over broken terrain presented an entirely new challenge to the 112th, as the astute Private William McDonnell discovered when the troopers of 2d Squadron entered the mountains a few days later. After plodding up and down “a relentless series of spiny ridges,” his unit formed a perimeter and settled down for the night. He awoke to the sound of gunfire somewhere off to his right followed by another rattling exchange far to the rear and realized that the battlefield was much different compared to what he had encountered on Arawe and the Driniumor. In contrast, McDonnell found the “front” on Leyte to be nothing like “a reasonably solid line of men advancing towards the enemy. . . . Rather, it consisted of isolated groups, battalions at best, which sustained themselves as best they could.”<sup>21</sup>

Difficult terrain, shoddy maps, and poor visibility exacerbated the already existing challenges of command and control during an offensive. The degree to which American units relied on indirect fire support further complicated matters. Grant dispatched a number of contact patrols each day to exchange information with the outfits to his left and right and to stay abreast of their progress. Yet these hit or miss efforts to coordinate forward movement were certainly not enough to eliminate the risk of fratricide. Later in the campaign, the regiment adopted new

techniques to facilitate command and control, but, as the advance pushed west into the Cordilleras through mid-November, detachments from different units intermingled and sometimes collided.<sup>22</sup>

By 23 November, the RCT had shifted its focus away from securing the line of communication and was preparing to transform 1st Squadron's modest probing effort into a vigorous attack. Relieved by 2d of the 7th Cavalry, the 112th's 2d Squadron moved from the rear to positions on the southeastern slope of Mount Minoro while Grant's men continued to patrol about one thousand yards to the west. In the meantime, Miller had pushed his CP forward to better synchronize what was intended to be a regimental advance with two squadrons abreast. Still serving as the RCT reserve, Troop C remained outside Carigara, but, to compensate for this loss, Grant accepted temporary control of the attached Company E, 2d Battalion, 34th Infantry Regiment. Due to terrain restrictions, the tanks attached to the RCT remained in the rear as part of the reserve.<sup>23</sup>

Following a night of harassing suspected enemy positions with indirect fire, the regiment began its attack the morning of 24 November. H Troop's 81-mm mortars bombarded the high ground on the far side of a streambed almost a mile west of Minoro's peak. Shortly afterward, McMains moved forward with his 2d Squadron up an east-west draw. The unit found the terrain exceptionally rough and avoided the tangled vegetation of the ravines by treading carefully along the sloped sides of the mountain – an exhausting task in itself, but the lesser of two evils. One thousand yards to the north, 1st Squadron ran into a dozen enemy soldiers and put an end to the threat with a well-placed artillery concentration.<sup>24</sup> On the squadron's northern flank, Troop B trailed Company E as the infantrymen pushed west toward the objective, orienting on Sinayawan.



There appears to have been some misunderstanding over exactly what the objective was, and, given the fluid situation, the terrain, and imprecise maps, this should have come as no surprise. Grant had grid coordinates for the key terrain his squadron was supposed to seize, but this information had little utility to him as he surveyed the ground his unit was traversing. Seeking guidance, he contacted Cunningham on the radio. The two tried to make sense of an aerial photograph of the sector, but the exchange did little to dispel Grant's confusion. It only confirmed that neither he nor the general really knew where 1st Squadron was headed. Grant decided just to continue west until the Japanese stopped him.<sup>25</sup>

Around noon on 24 November, Troop B linked up with 1st Squadron's attached infantry company shortly after a strong Japanese outpost had checked its advance one mile east of Sinayawan. Suffering heavy casualties in their mid-morning attack, the men of Company E had withdrawn out of contact and now occupied some high ground about two to three hundred yards from a well-concealed enemy position atop a steep, forested ridge. Grant put Captain Leonard L. Johnson, Troop B's commander, in charge of both units and told him to capture the piece of terrain that E Company's infantrymen had begun to call "The Pimple."<sup>26</sup>

A detailed description of this tactical action reveals that the RCT had made only limited progress when it came to the daunting task of eliminating Japanese strongpoints. Despite the experience of two campaigns, the same problems of closing with the enemy persisted. As on Arawe, the cavalymen encountered tenacious defenders dug in and well camouflaged. With their forces kept at a distance by machine gun fire, leaders found it extremely difficult to pinpoint individual positions in order to destroy them – though it was not for a lack of trying. The central lesson that emerged from this engagement revolved around the indispensability of artillery support and the apparent futility of maneuver in its absence. Unfortunately, this mindset

did not serve the regiment well later in the operation when another set of Japanese fortifications proved practically impervious to indirect fire.

Johnson launched his attack at 1530. Covering the movement with light machine guns, he ordered a platoon of E Company to reestablish contact. Although this unit's assault up the ridgeline was repulsed, the occurrence of the firefight distracted the defenders enough to allow Johnson to pull other platoons close to the base of hill, where they began to entrench. The captain soon found that this put most of his men at a terrible disadvantage, however. While the GIs' proximity improved their chances of identifying enemy foxholes, there was not sufficient protection. Every aimed shot seemed to be answered by a hail of machine gun fire and a cascade of hand grenades. Before long, the force had sustained two killed and ten wounded. Johnson fell back, his position untenable. Loathe to surrender all of his meager gains, he kept one platoon in contact. These troopers endured a frightful night in their perimeter, turning back enemy probes and listening to the din of picks and shovels as Japanese soldiers on the slopes above them improved their defenses.<sup>27</sup>

Grant went to the front early the next morning to assess the situation. He had Johnson withdraw his forward platoon two hundred yards in order to clear the area for a mortar and artillery preparation, which fell around noon. The effects of the shelling were disappointing, but Grant decided that he had no choice at the moment other than to carry out the attack.<sup>28</sup>

Continuing mortar fire provided some protection for the lead platoon as it returned to the position it had held the previous night. However, once the troopers reached the base of the ridgeline, effective assistance from the mortars became nearly impossible. Rounds falling on the high-angled slopes ahead of them were too inaccurate and, thus, unsafe for close-in support.

So without the help of indirect fires, the cavalymen of the forward platoon began to scramble up "The Pimple" as Johnson led the rest of Troop B into the fight. The momentum

behind the initial assault yielded some early gains. Clawing their way ahead, the soldiers of the lead platoon advanced about ten yards beyond their positions from the preceding day. Even this small accomplishment was considerable in Johnson's eyes.<sup>29</sup> As the defenders concentrated on containing this possible point of penetration, the captain was able to occupy slightly better terrain with the additional platoons he brought forward. Men could raise their heads, catch a glimpse of the enemy emplacements, and more accurately direct hand grenades and machine gun fire. While an improvement, the new positions near the bottom of the hill were not enough to overcome Japanese fire superiority. The attack stalled, and Johnson could only hold the line. Attempts to charge up the sides of "The Pimple" failed to make any substantial progress as the afternoon passed.

There were many factors working against the cavalymen. For one, simply climbing the ridge would have been grueling in itself. Wet from the recent rains, its slopes were so steep and slippery that, in some places, soldiers had to grab onto tree roots as they crawled up. Moreover, troopers faced skilled Japanese defenders who exploited the advantages of the terrain. By now, Grant suspected that he was up against an enemy company dug-in on both sides of the tree-covered ridgeline. From these positions, the Japanese laid down a blanket of interlocking gunfire, shot knee mortars, and threw hand grenades down the hillside. Together, the result was a withering storm of fire more intense than anything even the 112th's veterans had experienced. The enemy's ability to sustain this maelstrom for hours also drew surprise. A rattled platoon leader coming off the line exclaimed in disbelief, "As soon as one Jap is shot, another takes his place!"<sup>30</sup> Expressing a similar sentiment, a staff officer writing the account of 1st Squadron's daily operations surmised that the "enemy seems to have an unlimited supply of grenades and ammunition."<sup>31</sup>

Although he lacked adequate artillery support, Johnson fought on throughout the afternoon, and Grant assisted where he could. Still holding out hope, the captain tried to organize a synchronized charge with his platoons on line, but the Japanese disrupted this effort with what Johnson described as a coordinated grenade attack on his strongest position. Soon after, Grant sent Company E forward to reinforce his Troop B commander. Realizing by now that the rough, irregular terrain around “The Pimple” effectively limited any attacking force to a frontage of only one hundred yards, Johnson directed this unit to flank the enemy.<sup>32</sup> Predictably, this move was complicated to execute without prior planning and thus was slow to develop. In any case, the Japanese had already taken the proper precautions against such a maneuver. Believing that he had exhausted all of his options and sensing no imminent gains, Johnson – himself wounded by a grenade – requested permission to withdraw.<sup>33</sup> He got no argument from Grant.

In its attack on the ridgeline, B Troop had taken a beating. The unit had begun the day with 130 men. By evening it had suffered 6 killed and 26 wounded with an additional 25 troopers out of action due to battle fatigue.<sup>34</sup> To Cunningham, these losses indicated a correspondingly high level of effort – sufficient anyway to mollify his anger at not seizing the objective. Indeed, the amount of casualties sustained by Troop B may have shocked the RCT commander into momentary civility. In a radio conversation with Grant the next day, he praised Johnson for his actions during the attack and noted that his “excellent conduct and spirit” had been brought to the attention of the commanding generals of both the 1st Cavalry Division and X Corps.<sup>35</sup> Grant later received a Bronze Star for directing the battle. Though unable to recall whether the medal awarded to his troop commander was a Bronze or Silver Star, the lieutenant colonel recalled that – whatever it was – Johnson had earned it two or three times that day.<sup>36</sup> So with nearly 45 percent of its men out of action, Troop B pulled off the line on the evening of 25

November. It would have nothing to do with capturing the seemingly impregnable enemy position the following day. Nevertheless, Troop B had made its mark on the slick, steep slopes of a spiny ridgeline about a mile west of Mount Minoro. Veterans of the 112th do not refer to this piece of terrain as “The Pimple.” To all in the regiment, it became known as “Baker Hill.”

The battle was over for Johnson’s cavalymen but not for Grant. To clear Baker Hill, he would accept help from 2d Squadron. McMains, whose unit met no resistance as it came alongside 1st Squadron’s southern flank, conferred with Grant after Troop B’s final withdrawal, and the two developed a plan. Their scheme reflected the 112th’s amplified appreciation for the strength of the enemy defenses on the ridge. Troop G would take B Troop’s place on the line and serve as the main effort. Since the terrain severely restricted the number of options available for maneuver, the plan resembled the 25 November assault. To the extent that they could, two other troops would support the operation by putting pressure on the Japanese flanks.<sup>37</sup> This prior coordination and the decision to launch an attack from multiple directions were important differences.

The most crucial distinction was a renewed emphasis on massing field artillery fire. Although Grant called for one hundred rounds during B Troop’s assault, only twenty-eight were fired, and many of these were duds. Demanding an explanation, the RCT was told that ammunition expenditure restrictions prohibited the artillery battalions from shooting additional rounds.<sup>38</sup> This policy, which must have come as an unpleasant surprise to the 112th, was based on Sixth Army’s expectation that it would experience difficulty with unloading huge quantities of supplies at Leyte’s limited port facilities. To better manage one aspect of this problem, Krueger imposed restrictions on the amount of ammunition artillery units could expend per day. These restrictions were lifted two weeks into the campaign after the unloading rates of supply ships improved, but transporting tons of ammunition to the front remained a challenge,

especially as units advanced inland. The effect of torrential rains on the unpaved roads only made matters worse.

Less obvious consequences of the restrictions may have been even more pernicious. Sixth Army's chief of artillery noted approvingly that these limitations conditioned ground force commanders to employ their available fire support more economically. However, what perhaps cultivated sensible restraint in infantry and cavalry leaders may have spawned something quite different in those supporting them. Mindful of the fragility of a supply system laboring under the strain of truck shortages and muddy roads, artillery commanders had begun to institute their own "close check on ammunition expenditures to prevent firing on 'lone enemy snipers.'"<sup>39</sup> The unwarranted stinginess of such men might explain why Grant's squadron received only a quarter of the artillery rounds it requested for the 25 November attack, especially when other units in 1st Cavalry Division's sector were encountering major resistance at the time. Whatever the cause of this breakdown in support, higher headquarters took steps to ensure that it would not happen again. The first reward for B Troop's valor was the X Corps commander's promise of "unlimited" artillery fire for the next day's operation.<sup>40</sup>

The issue with fire support went beyond quantity. It was a matter of accuracy, as well. Precipitous slopes and a narrow crest twenty-five yards wide characterized 1st Squadron's objective, making it appear "knife-edged" and "razor-like" in the eyes of those attempting to scale it. These same features also made the defensive positions on it extremely hard to hit with indirect fire. The direction from which the supporting guns were shooting made it even harder.<sup>41</sup> Moreover, leaders suspected (correctly) that the Japanese shielded themselves on the reverse slope of the ridge and then moved to emplacements on the forward slope after the preparation had ended, thus reducing the effectiveness of those rounds that may have actually hit close to their mark. To solve this problem of precision, the RCT arranged for a change in the locations of

one or more artillery battalions. With units firing along a line more parallel to the narrow ridge, rounds that had completely missed the objective on 25 November would stand a better chance of landing near the target during the follow-on attack the next day.<sup>42</sup>

The operation that resulted in the capture of Baker Hill commenced with a bombardment that was everything the X Corps commander guaranteed it would be. True enough, quantity had a quality all its own, but the accuracy surpassed that of the preceding day as well. Starting at 1220, over five hundred howitzer rounds pulverized the enemy defenses. The thunderous sound impressed Private McDonnell of Troop G as he hugged the ground during the preparation, and the smell of explosives soon drifted across the battlefield to where he laid waiting for the assault. After thirty minutes, the barrage lifted, and the attackers began their headlong charge to the base of the ridge and up the slopes. McDonnell described his breathless ascent: “Up we went, half-running, half-crawling, stumbling and crashing through the brush. Shots snapped passed us. . . . Grenades thudded here and there, but no one dropped and no one stopped. Suddenly and unbelievably we were at the top.”<sup>43</sup> Once on the crest, Troop G cleared it in short order. The supporting flanking maneuvers proved unnecessary.

The bombardment produced excellent results. In just over an hour, the 112th overran a position that had delayed its progress for the better part of three days and had done so without losing a man in the final assault. Dazed, injured, or killed by accurate and sustained indirect fire, the enemy put forth only cursory resistance to G Troop’s attack. Counting the Japanese dead turned out to be a difficult task because the rain of artillery shells had churned up the earth and collapsed bunkers and trenches. One estimate put the figure at twenty-five, but some defenders had certainly withdrawn following the barrage. McDonnell looked around him and found Baker Hill to be “a carnage of dirt, branches, and debris.”<sup>44</sup> The 112th’s success on 26 November

reflected some improvement in its ability to coordinate an attack but had more to do with the acquisition and application of firepower, namely ample and accurate artillery support.

One element of firepower conspicuously missing during the three days the regiment assaulted Baker Hill was close air support. Sixth Army planners had grossly overestimated the Leyte Valley's capability to meet the operational requirements of Fifth U.S. Air Force. Airfields used during the Japanese occupation demanded major repairs to bring them up to standard. Moreover, heavy rains throughout the first forty-five days rendered much of the already boggy flatlands hopelessly unsuitable for runways. As staff officers searched for alternative sites, engineers hastened to improve the few adequate facilities. Other engineers originally slated for airfield construction were diverted to rebuild roads drenched by the seasonal typhoons. Added to these reasons for delay was the imperative to interdict the enemy's surprisingly successful attempts to reinforce the island by sea. The restricted number of functioning airfields naturally put a limit on the amount of planes based in Leyte. With other missions competing for these scant resources, one can see why Sixth Army received little in the way of close air support.<sup>45</sup>

The 112th's introduction to combat on Leyte illustrates how the urgency of other threats drew friendly aircraft away from a ground support role to the detriment of tactical engagements. As the regiment advanced deeper into the Cordilleras on the morning of 24 November, the cavalymen observed a dogfight overhead as U.S. aircraft shot down a pair of Japanese planes. Leaders also heard reports that this local action may have involved as many as six enemy bombers.<sup>46</sup> Though no doubt happy about the American pilots' small victory and pleased that they were not at the receiving end of an air attack, probably few troopers grasped the significance of the clash they had witnessed. Fifth Air Force had its hands full. Consequently, there would be no aerial bombardment of Baker Hill either on that day or the ones that followed.



In retrospect, Krueger saw the failure to build up American air strength on the island as decisive. If available, adequate airpower would have unquestionably shortened the operation not only by shutting down the influx of Japanese reinforcements but also by helping ground units reduce the defenses that so boldly defied them. The enemy's own air offensive also had the effect of curbing U.S. naval activity in the waters west of Leyte. In any event, the first close support mission occurred over a month into the campaign when four P-40s strafed Japanese positions on 26 November in central Leyte. American planes flew only five more missions in close support of ground troops for the remainder of the campaign, and three of these came on 23 December – just two days before Sixth Army officially concluded its operations on the island.<sup>47</sup>

Throughout November and into the next month, Japanese leaders clung to the notion that Leyte should be held at all costs and continued with their prodigious undertaking to reinforce the island. The obstacles to getting Fifth Air Force off the ground lent a certain degree of success to this venture, and the equivalent of three additional divisions ultimately reached the combat zone. Besides delaying X Corps' drive toward Ormoc, elements of these units mounted an early December counterattack to recapture American airfields in the Leyte Valley. Though causing quite a stir in Sixth Army's rear area for a short time, this was largely a wasteful effort. More than anything, it eroded Japanese strength and practically guaranteed U.S. success in the decisive operation that would end the campaign.<sup>48</sup>

Faced with determined resistance in the mountains north of Ormoc, Krueger intended to crush the Japanese on Leyte in a vise comprised of his two corps. In the north, the 32d Infantry Division had relieved the 24th on 14 November and continued the attack south along Highway 2 and through the Cordilleras. Guarding its left flank and applying further pressure on the enemy, the 1st Cavalry Division with the 112th RCT attached made its own way southwest over the mountains toward the more open ground of the Ormoc Valley. By mid-November, the other half

of Sixth Army's vise, XXIV Corps, had advanced across the central mountain range to threaten Ormoc from the west and south. Krueger also toyed with the idea of landing a force on the coast just below the port, and the arrival of another American division provided him with the forces to do so. The general issued orders for an offensive to take place all along the line at the end of the first week of December.<sup>49</sup>

Sixth Army's plan to encircle the Japanese on Leyte did little to alleviate the tactical challenges faced by the 112th. For one, the unit still found itself amid a snarl of forested ridges and ravines repeatedly drenched by seasonal rains and shrouded by mist. This harsh environment, coupled with poor visibility, made navigation and movement exceedingly difficult. After a week, its effects also proved debilitating to the troopers, several of whom showed signs of fatigue or skin disease. Casualties sustained in combat added to this health-related attrition, and, with one troop badly bloodied already, the regiment needed replacements. Inexperienced and often inadequately trained, these were a mixed blessing as leaders knew, and integrating them into squads and platoons given the conditions of the Leyte battlefield promised to be one more hurdle. As the 112th pushed deeper into the Cordilleras, supplying the force over this rough terrain became another matter of concern. Although compensated Filipino labor reduced the burden, the unit had to commit many soldiers not only to securing the line of communication but to transporting supplies as well. Amid these growing manpower constraints, the loss of Company E when it reverted back to the 34th Infantry Regiment's control on 29 November hurt even more. Finally, in spite of eliminating the opposition on Baker Hill, the RCT soon found that there was plenty of fight left in the Japanese defending the northern Cordilleras.

This did not appear to be the case as the 112th resumed its advance toward Highway 2 on 27 November. Leading the way, McMains' 2d Squadron made slow progress as it traversed the uneven ground but had no trouble with the handful of stragglers it encountered. One troop

detected a platoon of unsuspecting Japanese cooking breakfast and killed all thirty of them. Trailing McMains a short distance, elements of 1st Squadron also brushed aside feeble resistance while Troop C made its way forward from Carigara. For two days, the regiment pushed west, occasionally finding and killing small groups of the enemy, maintaining contact with the 32d Infantry Division to its north and the 1st Cavalry on its southern flank, and covering a little over a mile in the process.<sup>50</sup>

On 29 November, the 112th got a frustrating reminder of just how formidable an adversary the terrain could be. 2d Squadron jumped off in the morning with the attached C Troop on its left. If Private McDonnell's words are any indication, then negotiating the steep slopes was both physically and mentally torturous. "Still fighting the ridges that always ran at right angles to our advance," he recalled, "we would struggle and crawl up one side, then slide and plunge down the other."<sup>51</sup> Before long, the lead elements of both columns became disoriented. At 0900, artillery rounds were fired to assist each with determining its location. When McMains discovered that Troop C was actually moving along a ridgeline that ran parallel to the one on which his squadron was traveling, he told the captain in command to reposition his unit so that an impassable ravine did not separate them. Unfortunately, the existence of this natural obstacle already made taking the direct route infeasible and required the troop to backtrack some distance before it could swing north and then catch up to McMains.<sup>52</sup> Though well intentioned, this move took Troop C out of the fight for three days, demonstrating the difficulty of coordinating the advance of a regiment through the Cordilleras.

Pushing deeper into the mountains further encumbered an already strained logistical system. With the roads choked with mud and impassable for wheeled traffic, the regiment borrowed LVTs, tracked vehicles designed for amphibious landings, and used them to make supply runs as far as the 112th's forward CP in the foothills. After dropping off rations and

ammunition, they would return to the rear – often with some of the unit’s casualties.<sup>53</sup> LVTs handled part of the load, but they were not always available and could only go so far.

After the Baker Hill fight, Piper Cubs assigned to the RCT’s supporting artillery battalions played a more crucial role in the resupply mission. By making several ten to fifteen-mile trips per day, each plane could deliver up two thousand pounds of provisions. Their willingness to perform this unconventional assignment and the frequency in which they carried it out allowed the pilots to determine some useful lessons on aerial supply. To minimize the impact on the material they dropped, fliers made their releases while following the downhill slope of the terrain. Ammunition, clothing, and rations packaged in easily handled burlap sandbags could fall freely. More sensitive items, like radio batteries or blood plasma, required a jury-rigged parachute to slow their descent. Finding the correct unit posed problems sometimes but none that improvised signaling could not solve. In clear weather, a barebacked GI could be spotted at an altitude of two thousand feet, and five men lying on the ground could spell out “1-1-2.” If Cub fliers could not visually confirm that a unit was ready to receive a drop, they aborted the mission and made plans to try again. None expected the troopers to argue this point. As one pilot wryly noted, “It is much better to go hungry than be hit on the head by a sackful of ‘C’ rations.”<sup>54</sup> When Grant later moved west toward Highway 2, he relied more and more on liaison planes for resupply. By the end of the first week of December, Piper Cubs would take over this task completely.<sup>55</sup>

In contrast, 2d Squadron relied on overland transport throughout its weeks in the Cordilleras, but this means of logistical support was no less complicated. Although engineers explored the feasibility of building a road beyond the foothills, supplies delivered to McMains’ front line units ultimately came at the high cost of countless man-hours, aching backs, and blistered hands and feet.<sup>56</sup> As it had in New Guinea and elsewhere, Sixth Army planned on

using hired native labor to provide much of the muscle. However, in the X Corps sector, this source proved inadequate and at times unreliable. The Japanese had evacuated certain coastal villages in the vicinity of Carigara Bay, thus reducing the pool of potential carriers. The inexperience of American civil affairs units may have contributed to the shortage as well since Australian officials, until this campaign, had handled the task of recruiting natives to support the military effort.<sup>57</sup> Finally, the rough terrain exacted a high physical toll on individuals and simply increased the quantity of workers required on the demanding route from Carigara to U.S. positions in the Cordilleras.

Filipino porters were still a crucial part of the system, but the 112th had to devote a significant portion of its own manpower to moving essential provisions forward. The regimental reconnaissance platoon was the first to be pressed into service. These men started carrying rations to their comrades on 20 November. Soon after, Miller committed his weapons troop to running supply trains in and out of the mountains, a task that became its primary mission on Leyte. By the end of the month, the 112th had established a system whereby hired natives, GIs from headquarters and weapons troops, and recently arrived replacements carried supplies to an exchange point just west of Baker Hill. From there, the weapons troops organic to each squadron took over, covering the remaining distance and transporting the much-needed material to the front. For a few days, two platoons of Troop B supplemented this labor force.<sup>58</sup>

In light of the problems the regiment experienced with attacking prepared positions, it is worthwhile to consider the cost that terrain, weather, and a limited pool of civilian porters imposed on tactical operations. Getting food and ammunition to forward units was a non-negotiable task. If resupplying the line troops required all available manpower in the 112th, then it came with a price. Squadrons lacked the firepower of their weapons troops in the attack, and the reconnaissance platoon busied itself with another mission rather than searching for ways

around the flanks of formidable enemy strongpoints. While other factors contributed to the unit's difficulties, the unmatched logistical burdens on Leyte undoubtedly had a negative impact on offensive ability.

For the 165 newcomers joining the regiment midway through the operation, slogging across the Cordilleras as part of a supply train proved to be a rude introduction to campaigning in the Southwest Pacific. Sergeant Melvin J. Waite arrived at Leyte on 24 November. After marking time in a replacement depot for a week, the senior noncommissioned officer reported to a 112th base camp, drew personal combat gear, and learned that the next day he and several others would make the trek into the mountains. Waite's 2 December journal entry described the wretched initiation he and his companions endured: "Each man carrying a 45-pound pack. Had to ford a . . . waist deep . . . river eight times. Raining continually. Packs are heavy. Men are not in shape for this. Some are too old and had soft jobs in the States, but no quitters."<sup>59</sup> They spent a frightful night on the trail – compliments of the enemy's artillery – before lumbering on to the drop-off point. There, the detail of replacements picked up three wounded troopers and lugged them back to the rear on stretchers, a task they found "more difficult than carrying rations." Waite returned to camp late that evening "soaked and cold and hungry," wrapped himself in a poncho, and slept off his misery.<sup>60</sup>

Following the Baker Hill victory, 2d Squadron pressed on generally unimpeded until gunfire checked its progress on 29 November. The cavalymen's first response after taking cover was to call for artillery. Fifteen minutes later, eighty rounds fell on the steep ridge that confronted them. McMains sent forward one platoon from Troop F once the barrage lifted, but it withdrew when machine gun fire took out two of its men. As this force regrouped, the squadron commander coordinated for an increased dosage of the same medicine. Following an artillery concentration consisting of 320 rounds, the troop charged up the slopes of the narrow ridge, this

time against no opposition. Reaching the top, it found five enemy dead and an abandoned bivouac site close by that might have accommodated thirty to forty soldiers. The cavalymen of Troop F bedded down for the night on the ground they had seized while the remainder of the squadron dug in to the east.<sup>61</sup> If the experience of Baker Hill served to reinforce the utility of firepower liberally applied, it would appear that the 112th had learned its lesson well. In its next test, however, the regiment would find that simple solution sadly insufficient.

McMains continued his advance the next morning, moving another thousand yards before his unit again met stiff resistance as it approached a ridgeline within two miles of Highway 2. The troopers withdrew a safe distance and waited for the 99th Howitzer Battalion to deliver a 250-round bombardment on the Japanese defenses. Troop F attacked in the immediate aftermath but fell back after losing three men killed and three wounded and making no headway. Buying some time to mull over this new complication, McMains suspended further assaults and established his own positions on defensible terrain outside machine gun range. For the remainder of the day, both sides traded small arms fire intermittently.

Halted for the time being, the senior leaders of the 112th considered the tactical problem. The regiment faced an enemy force of unknown strength apparently dug in and well concealed on a ridge shaped like a colossal, gnarled finger studded with forested knolls. It pointed toward 2d Squadron, the length of it extending away to the west and sharply defined by steep sides. The surrounding terrain left an attacking force no clear choice but to make its way up the finger's tip on an avenue of approach some twenty-five yards-wide. The situation's close resemblance to Baker Hill was plainly apparent – with one alarming difference.<sup>62</sup> The Baker Hill defenders had not survived a large artillery concentration as those confronting McMains most certainly had. How would the RCT crack this tough nut? After ten days of wrestling with this question, commanders would still be wondering.

Needless to say, the presence of Japanese positions astride 2d Squadron's line of advance altered the unit's mission. Shifting their focus from seizing a section of Highway 2 to destroying the enemy force on the ridge, the troopers spent the first three days of December conducting frontal assaults supported by artillery preparations. The scale of these bombardments was on par with the Baker Hill shellacking, and their arrangement became gradually more sophisticated. The first of two assaults on 2 December was preceded by a concentration consisting of four hundred 75-mm rounds.<sup>63</sup> On the next day, according to the regimental diary, the cavalymen's second attempt went forward after artillery fire "covered" the target as forward observers meticulously adjusted the incoming volleys and "worked [them] up and down the ridge three times." A final barrage of one hundred 105-mm rounds was "thrown in" just before Troop F assaulted.<sup>64</sup> Like all the others, this charge was repulsed, the artillery obviously having little effect on the well-protected defenses.

Going up against a network of emplacements that seemed impervious to indirect fire only partially explained the reasons for these recurring failures. Once again, the Japanese had chosen to make their stand on terrain that favored the defenders by a wide margin. Troop-sized elements approached the finger ridge with no great difficulty but were stopped cold when they hit the incline leading up to the enemy's main position. At that point, the cavalymen had to begin scaling the slopes on their hands and knees while their adversaries let loose a hail of grenades and machine gun fire. The assaulting platoons probably had assistance in the form of suppressive fire from other units in the squadron, but the positions that had protected the Japanese against incoming artillery rounds also served to minimize the impact of this support. What is more, the troopers apparently had problems identifying individual enemy emplacements, which prevented them from effectively concentrating the firepower they had at their disposal. At



one point, McMains sent a bazooka team forward, but it was taken out by machine gun fire before it could be put to good use.<sup>65</sup>

Over the course of three days, the charges themselves resulted in only a small number of casualties, suggesting that 2d Squadron demonstrated a lack of aggressiveness.<sup>66</sup> This was probably true. It seems fair to characterize the attacks as cautious, and, given the conditions, it is not hard to understand why. Even if the fire erupting from camouflaged positions above cut down few cavalymen, it was sufficient to discourage efforts to advance further into the tempest, especially once the steepness of the ridge drained the assault of momentum. Against a nearly invisible enemy and with the ordeal of Baker Hill fresh in their minds, commanders were reluctant to push the matter to the point of recklessness – especially when the Japanese strongpoint might prove vulnerable elsewhere.

While some 2d Squadron troops made successive attempts at frontal assaults, the rest of the regiment explored the possibility of rolling up the enemy from the flank or rear. Since the narrow avenue of approach limited the size of his attacking force, McMains had more than enough men to conduct reconnaissance. One reinforced platoon from Troop E threaded its way through the rough terrain around the position's left flank to a point two hundred yards beyond the front. It came under fire, confirming that the defenses had considerable depth. The patrol had to disengage but not before it took out two machine gun nests. Meanwhile, 1st Squadron bypassed the strongpoint to the north and headed west over a thousand yards to the Leyte River, where it established contact with the 126th Infantry a half-mile from Highway 2. From there, Troop A prepared to turn south in an effort to locate the line of communication of the Japanese unit confronting 2d Squadron, cut its route of supply, and possibly attack it from the rear.<sup>67</sup>

From its well-organized defenses, the enemy force not only drove back McMains' assaults but also had engaged the cavalymen in ways that only served to lessen their appetite for

accomplishing the task at hand. During the night of 30 November, Japanese raiders penetrated 2d Squadron's perimeter, killed one trooper with a knife and wounded five more before slipping back toward their lines. This reception apparently stimulated a more watchful defense, for the following evening the Americans repelled a party of infiltrators without losing any soldiers. Keeping up the pressure in the daylight hours, enemy snipers harassed the flanks of Troops E and F on 2 December. The situation intensified in the afternoon when at least a reinforced platoon rushed down from the high ground to strike the U.S. positions. Though this group was practically destroyed, it succeeded in bloodying the nose of 2d Squadron, inflicting sixteen casualties. These real dangers notwithstanding, Japanese artillery in the initial days of the battle provided the chief surprise and accounted for many of the losses.

As X Corps drew nearer to Highway 2 and the Ormoc Valley, it also came within range of a number of enemy guns. The 112th had experienced incoming indirect fire in the form of a few stray U.S. projectiles, but Japanese shelling – however erratic – was something new altogether, even for veteran cavalrymen. On 29 November, three rounds landed alarmingly close to Miller's forward CP as though they were warning shots intended for the entire regiment. Later that day, Japanese gunners started hitting their targets. Troop C sustained four casualties from artillery as it trekked east, retracing its steps after an error in route selection. The next evening, the headquarters detachment of 1st Squadron took incoming, with shells killing two and wounding one. The entire squadron lost eighteen more personnel to indirect fire a few hours afterward when fifteen rounds exploded in its assembly area. The shock of the unfamiliar was taking its toll.

The 1st of December saw the heaviest shelling. Grant escaped with only five wounded as most of it fell to his north, but, in fixed positions just east of the Japanese strongpoint, 2d Squadron suffered significantly. An early morning barrage hit McMains' CP and crashed into

his troops as they marshaled for their frontal assault. After essentially breaking up this attack, the enemy artillery – often shooting single-gun missions – continued sporadically throughout the day, each round splintering the trees and adding to the cavalymen's woe. Altogether, 2d Squadron suffered two killed and eight seriously wounded. Despite the absence of massed fire and the relatively high percentage of duds, the Japanese gunners imposed a substantial psychological burden on the 112th.<sup>68</sup>

With 2d Squadron's assaults making no progress, the RCT shifted the emphasis of operations away from these futile actions on 4 December and redoubled its efforts to search for exploitable weaknesses in the enemy rear. Cunningham instructed McMains to maintain pressure on what was now deemed a company strongpoint some two to three hundred yards in depth and to contain its forces while shoring up his own defenses. Accordingly, the squadron commander improved the disposition of his units and sent one platoon of Troop F forward a short distance to keep the enemy's attention focused on the finger's tip. Once more, he dispatched platoon-sized patrols off to his left and right but this time, had them probe further than they had before with the aim of locating an assailable flank. For two days, these elements managed to find and engage small groups of stragglers, yet they failed to accomplish their most urgent mission. Penetrating over six hundred yards beyond the front line in some cases, patrols were stymied either by machine gun fire or the sheer sides of the ridge.

Perhaps because these exertions met with frustration, the regiment authorized one more serious effort to take the position by frontal assault. On 6 December, 75-mm and 105-mm howitzers from the 1st Cavalry Division's supporting artillery fired six hundred rounds, smothering the ridgeline in a twenty-minute bombardment. Then, preceded by 81-mm mortar fire, the troopers charged forward to the base of ridge, where – as usual – their momentum dissipated as they met stiff resistance from the enemy as well as the terrain. After going no

further than previous attempts, the attackers withdrew. Two men had been slightly wounded.<sup>69</sup> That afternoon, Cunningham determined that “suicidal” attacks would no longer be made against the strongpoint “since the ground that was held was of no strategic value and was exceptionally dangerous” due to the advantages in fire superiority it afforded the enemy.<sup>70</sup> Such a pronouncement only served to sanction what subordinate leaders had already decided days before. As the low casualty figures attest, there was nothing “suicidal” about the manner in which 2d Squadron conducted any of its assaults. In repeatedly charging the ridgeline over the course of a week, the unit was no doubt banging its head against a wall, but it did so in a way that bruised rather than bloodied. Given their perception of the situation, this seemed prudent. As events turned out though, it may have been too prudent.

For the next three days, combat patrols from both squadrons continued to weave their way over the jagged, wooded landscape looking for a weakly defended and accessible route of attack. A few found paths that looked promising, but, upon closer investigation, none bore any fruit. Hindered by rough terrain, limited visibility, and inaccurate maps, troopers by now considered the task of locating a usable trail to the top of the ridge as a matter of trial and error. They might as well have been looking for the fabled Northwest Passage. After a couple of more platoon-sized probes failed to make any headway, Cunningham withdrew 2d Squadron and sent it to the rear.<sup>71</sup>

The general relieved McMains’ battle-weary unit on 10 December and replaced it with the 2d Squadron of 1st Cavalry Division’s 7th Regiment. Still attached to the RCT, this organization continued the operation against the Japanese strongpoint, initially with the same ineffectual results. Having arrived at the front after guarding the X Corps line of communication east and west of Carigara, 2d of the 7th conducted troop-sized frontal assaults supported by massive artillery barrages on 11 and 12 December. As usual, the defenders endured the

bombardments and drove off the attacks, wounding two Americans on the first day and inflicting six more casualties on the second. In contrast to previous endeavors though, Lieutenant Colonel Robert P. Kirk ordered his troopers to dig in after the last attempt at their limit of advance and maintain contact throughout the night. From this location, leaders were able to distinguish individual bunkers up the slopes of the ridge. A small element keyed in on these emplacements as it ascended the heights in the darkness and infiltrated the enemy perimeter. The patrol took out two machine guns and killed four soldiers before creeping back to friendly lines.

The initiation of this steady chipping away of the strongpoint marked the beginning of the end for the Japanese. As Troop G engaged the built-up positions to its front the next morning, F Troop made its way to the rear of the ridgeline. The cavalymen clambered forward but withdrew when met with heavy machine gun fire. They called for 81-mm mortar fire and hunkered down as the incoming rounds exploded less than fifty yards away, close enough for the troopers to hear their opponents scream. The lead elements noticed that the Japanese fire had slackened as they charged ahead to regain the lost yards once the barrage lifted. G Troop's assault lasted through the morning and into the late afternoon, and this persistence paid off. After scraping this deeper niche into the enemy perimeter, several more bunkers came into view.

This improved visibility allowed 2d of the 7th to concentrate their firepower more effectively, which – coupled with the pressure of dogged attacks from two directions – proved essential to the elimination of the position on 14 December. After adjusting their artillery and mortars onto the target area, Kirk's men watched as over six hundred rounds pummeled the ridgeline just before the advance. Falling amid this impressive exhibition of indirect fire were the projectiles of a reinforced 4.2-inch mortar platoon, moved into range and attached to the RCT that morning. Observers noted that this weapon system's powerful high explosive shells and white phosphorous smoke rounds (with their burning agent) were particularly destructive.

Having found a suitable approach from which to strike the Japanese rear, Troop F was ready to join G Troop in a combined effort against the stronghold. Both outfits began their attack at noon, starting from locations roughly five hundred yards apart. With the help of flamethrowers, demolition teams, and automatic rifle fire, the cavalrymen closed the distance between their units bunker by bunker as the hours of the afternoon passed. By 1830, 2d of the 7th had overrun what reports referred to as “the most stubborn single enemy strongpoint” encountered by the 1st Cavalry Division throughout the course of the Leyte campaign.<sup>72</sup>

With its capture came the discovery of thirty emplacements, ten of which covered the rear. Many were dug into the base of trees and connected by tunnels. The troopers recovered eleven machine guns, six knee mortars, and plenty of ammunition. A conservative estimate placed the number of Japanese dead at fifty, but commanders suspected that dozens more were buried in the debris. For its performance on “George Hill,” G Troop was awarded a presidential citation. Kirk’s squadron as a whole suffered only two killed and three wounded in the engagement.<sup>73</sup>

How did 2d of 7th achieve in four days what the 112th’s 2d Squadron had failed to accomplish in twice as much time? To be sure, many factors apart from skill and ability appeared to favor the relieving unit over its predecessor. For one, 2d of the 7th conducted its operation after days of patrolling the rear area in relative safety and comfort as 2d Squadron pushed through the Cordilleras. Although Kirk’s cavalrymen traversed the same grueling terrain in their five-mile trek to replace McMains, they did so over an established and generally secure line of communication. Nor did 2d of the 7th have to endure heavy shelling or Japanese raids as it prepared for its attack. The cumulative effects of multiple bombardments had some role as well. While repeated artillery concentrations do not appear to have appreciably reduced the defenders’ effectiveness, the five thousand or so rounds fired on the position over the course of

two weeks undoubtedly helped to tear away portions of the vegetation concealing the bunkers and thus facilitated 2d of the 7th's attack by improving visibility. Along these lines, Kirk surely profited from the added firepower of 155-mm howitzers and 4.2-inch mortars while unit journals suggest that his counterpart did not enjoy the support of these weapon systems. All of the above necessarily play a part in any comparison between the organizations and their respective performances at George Hill.

Nevertheless, as difficult as the conditions were for McMains' troopers, it seems that they could have done more in their battle against the occupants of the strongpoint, especially in light of the relieving unit's success. Rather than mere circumstance, the crucial decisions and actions of the cavalymen in 2d of the 7th proved decisive in securing that squadron's victory. Following the failed assault of 12 December, Kirk opted to maintain a close contact with the Japanese instead of withdrawing out of direct-fire range. This choice set the conditions for G Troop's infiltration that night and placed the unit in a favorable posture to continue the attack over the next two days. This was a methodical and sustained advance aimed at individual emplacements, which were now visible due to the improved positioning of his soldiers. In turn, the ability to identify key targets – and the willingness to engage them at close ranges with indirect fire – allowed the troopers to apply their available firepower with more accuracy. Finally, whether through persistence or pure luck, 2d of the 7th discovered and quickly exploited what 2d of the 112th never did – a route up the rearward slope of the ridgeline. Perhaps more importantly, it managed to launch an assault from that direction with a force strong enough to overcome more than token resistance.

Though carried out over identical terrain and resulting in a similar number of casualties, Kirk's coordinated attack seemed to possess a level of resolve almost entirely absent from 2d Squadron's attempts. Why was this the case? The recent engagement at Baker Hill may have

sapped a measure of boldness from senior leaders of the 112th as they contemplated how best to handle the situation facing McMains. Days before, Troop B had suffered eight men killed and thirty-six wounded during its failed assaults. By comparison, the total casualties taken by 2d Squadron in its operations against George Hill (excluding losses due to enemy artillery) were about the same.<sup>74</sup> However, they were distributed throughout the entire squadron over a period of one-and-a-half weeks without the shock of the Baker Hill bloodletting. Furthermore, many of McMains' casualties occurred during Japanese raids – not as a result of calculated charges into the teeth of the ridgeline's defenses. This was probably not coincidental. Initially repulsed with heavy losses at Baker Hill, the regiment brought fresh forces into the fight, made a concerted effort to apply more firepower, and met with success the following day. When this formula failed for a variety of reasons during 2d Squadron's engagement, the 112th tweaked the method over the course of several iterations, seeking other responses to a certain extent. If casualties sustained are any indication, it avoided exposing units (perhaps deliberately) to the traumatic conditions Troop B had endured. Rather than run that risk, commanders became overly cautious.

Cunningham's 6 December directive to avoid "suicidal" attacks has already been mentioned. In fact, the attacks were not "suicidal," nor did those at the front intend to make them such. Nonetheless, this language persisted as other leaders described the situation confronting them at George Hill. Sent to fill in for McMains when the squadron commander was temporarily called to the rear, the regimental S-3 led a reconnaissance toward the ridgeline on 8 December. The patrol withdrew after heavy machine gun fire wounded one man, and the S-3 concluded that "any other frontal attempts" would be "useless."<sup>75</sup> Viewing the terrain for the first time in person the next day, Colonel Miller echoed these sentiments when he flatly characterized future efforts against the strongpoint as "practically suicidal."<sup>76</sup> 2d of the 7th's



cavalrymen may have felt the same way after ten days, but their actions ensured they would not have to find out.

Implications of Baker Hill notwithstanding, the reasons why 2d Squadron may have been less inclined to take similar actions had to do, more convincingly, with the 112th's prior training and the conduct of its earlier campaigns. The first two years of American involvement in the war saw the regiment deploy to assignments on the Mexican border, New Caledonia, and Woodlark Island. During that time, the troopers sent out security patrols, manned prepared defensive positions, and learned to cope in a jungle environment. They experienced no ground combat and had received only limited exposure to combined arms and squadron-sized operations. Moreover, the opportunities to perform focused training free from the distractions of garrison details and outpost duty were few. Indeed, the period was marked by the unit's rushed transition from mounted to dismounted status in May 1943 and all of the organizational, logistical, and training issues that such a conversion entailed.

Prior to Leyte, the 112th had fought the Japanese on New Britain's Arawe Peninsula and later along the Driniumor River on the northern coast of New Guinea, but these campaigns did little to prepare the regiment for its most difficult challenges in the Cordillera Mountains. Its baptism of fire at Arawe in December 1943 involved an amphibious assault against minimal resistance and then a defense of its beachhead from enemy counterattacks that were never more than company-sized in strength. Though at times more desperate, the situation on the Driniumor in July and August 1944 required a similar effort, only from hasty rather than well-prepared defenses. In both cases, the 112th conducted extensive patrolling operations at the platoon and squad level and actually acquired substantial tactical skill in this area during its first campaign. Not surprisingly, the lessons learned from these campaigns – especially those originating from enlisted men – centered on personal fieldcraft, weapons capabilities, patrolling techniques, and

establishing defensive positions. There was little discussion on how to conduct troop or squadron-sized offensive operations more effectively. Thus, combat experience could inform subsequent unit training and preparation for future campaigns only to a point.

The previous experiences of the 1st Cavalry Division seem to have better prepared 2d of the 7th for the type of fighting it would see on Leyte. Like the 112th, this division began the war as a mounted unit patrolling the Mexican border and continued this duty long after Cunningham and his men had departed for New Caledonia. In the first months of 1943, the 1st Cavalry reorganized into a dismounted unit and later deployed to the Southwest Pacific at approximately the same time that the 112th occupied Woodlark Island.<sup>77</sup> Thus far, the experiences of each had been similar. Both were horse-mounted organizations conducting security missions. Both operated in temperate regions with little or no jungle-like terrain. Both dealt with the distractions of garrison life, where training often became secondary in priority whether leaders liked it or not. However, their paths of experience started to diverge in the summer of 1943.

In August, the 1st Cavalry entered a period of concentrated training in preparation for a campaign that, as it turned out, required the development and application of significant offensive skill. While the 112th secured Woodlark and fell into a routine of base construction, patrolling, and manning the superfluous “Cunningham Line,” the division arrived at Australia and began five months of extensive training in jungle warfare and amphibious operations. In January 1944, as the 112th fought the Japanese at Arawe, the division moved to a staging base in New Guinea and, from there, served as the assault force for the invasion of the Admiralty Islands, at the time defended by roughly five thousand Japanese soldiers. Though they met scant resistance coming ashore on 29 February, the first elements of the division to land endured a few distressing nights as they fended off fierce but uncoordinated enemy attacks – far beyond the scale of those

launched by the Japanese at Arawe (but not unlike the kind successfully repelled by the 112th along the Driniumor).

After the first week of March, the campaign became almost exclusively offensive in nature as the troopers of 1st Cavalry Division extended their hold over the islands, capturing airdromes and destroying the enemy. This involved advancing over ridges and through heavily wooded areas and engaging opponents who defended from mutually supporting pillboxes. Their initial frontal assaults often checked, squadrons and regiments organized flanking forces and brought the firepower of tanks, artillery, and mortars to bear before resuming the attack, closing with the defenders, and finishing them off with grenades and flamethrowers.<sup>78</sup> The troopers stamped out all organized resistance by the end of March, at which point, Krueger recognized the unit for adding “a glorious page to cavalry annals.”<sup>79</sup> Its brilliant performance in the Admiralties established the 1st Cavalry’s reputation as one of the best divisions in SWPA.<sup>80</sup>

The 112th received its own set of compliments for Arawe and the Driniumor, but the congratulations of Krueger and others could hardly be cited as ringing endorsements of the regiment’s offensive capabilities.<sup>81</sup> The only assaults against fortified Japanese positions occurred at Arawe, and, though these ultimately succeeded, the unit’s manner of performance in handling this daunting task was marginal. Confronted by a carefully concealed and well-protected enemy strongpoint some two hundred yards from their outpost line, the cavalrymen launched a number of troop-sized attacks over a two-week period but were repulsed each time – even with the support of artillery concentrations and the suppressive fire of offshore amphibious craft. Efforts at envelopment proved frustrating as well since platoons found maneuver in the jungle easier said than done and, in any case, could not locate the flank of the position. Satisfied that they had accomplished their mission of securing the peninsula, senior leaders considered further attempts against the strongpoint to be wasteful. In Cunningham’s view, only the arrival

of a reinforcing infantry battalion and a company of light tanks gave him the combat power needed to break the stalemate. In a brief comparison between the 1st Cavalry and the 112th, it seems fair to say that the former's previous combat experience better prepared it for the trials that awaited elements of both units in the Cordilleras. It is not hard to imagine how the 112th's limited and ambivalent exposure to offensive operations worked to shape its responses at Baker Hill and especially George Hill.

Apart from acquiring more applicable battlefield experience, the 1st Cavalry Division also enjoyed a more productive recovery and retraining phase prior to its departure for the Philippines. After the major fighting ended in March, the division remained in the Admiralties until shipping out to Leyte in October. During its stay on the islands, the 1st Cavalry instituted a "vigorous" training program with "particular emphasis . . . on ascertaining the maximum capabilities and limitations of the Cavalry-Artillery-Engineer Team under the difficult conditions of jungle operations."<sup>82</sup> True enough, the responsibilities of base construction and security probably interfered with the unit's schedule, but, over such a long period of time, it seems reasonable to conclude that the division achieved more of what it set out to do than the 112th did in its two-and-a-half months at Aitape following the Driniumor campaign. At the very least, the 1st Cavalry did not have to deal with the disruption of rearranging its subordinate units to form weapons troops in each of its squadrons. Higher headquarters saddled Miller and Cunningham with this onerous task only weeks before they left Aitape, whereas the division had reorganized along these lines over a year before in Australia.<sup>83</sup>

To a certain extent, the senior leaders of the 1st Cavalry also avoided the personnel turbulence experienced by the 112th. Overstrength before it sailed for Leyte, the division did not face the challenge of having six hundred replacements added to one of its regiments a week before it confronted fortified Japanese positions.<sup>84</sup> Though in some respect victimized by a

mismanaged replacement system like the rest of Sixth Army, the 1st Cavalry Division had more time to incorporate its newest men into combat formations than the second-echelon forces committed to the liberation of the Philippines. Landing on 20 October, 2d of the 7th fought through the Leyte Valley against moderate resistance before its attachment to the 112th RCT and the assumption of duties along the coastal line of communication. By the time it relieved McMains' squadron in the Cordilleras in December, 2d of the 7th was arguably a more cohesive unit that had benefited from the experience of prior successful offensive operations, a focused retraining period, and a gradual exposure to combat in the harsh terrain of Leyte.

In fairness to its senior leaders, officers, and enlisted men, it must be said that the 112th suffers only by comparison to what by all accounts was an excellent organization. Though gloating would seem justified in retrospect, the daily journals and historical reports of the 1st Cavalry Division contain no descriptions of 2d of the 7th's victory that slight the efforts of Cunningham's RCT. In contrast, there seems to be an acute appreciation for just how difficult it was to take George Hill given the terrain, the logistical challenges, and the enemy's tenacity and defensive skill. General William C. Chase, a brigade commander during the operation, conveyed the division's respect for the troopers of the 112th when he wrote, "We felt that now they were an integral part of our outfit and we were proud of the brave Texans who fought at our side on Leyte."<sup>85</sup> Indeed, the sharpest critique of the regiment's performance during the campaign appears in these pages.

The 112th's faults were typical of most American units fighting on Leyte. In a thirty-six-page document distributed to his subordinates in late November, Krueger outlined in candid detail the "mistakes made and lessons learned" during the operation thus far. Strikingly comprehensive, the memorandum constituted nothing less than an indictment leveled at the entire Sixth Army. Pointing out the lack of aggressive action shown by some infantry units, the

G-3 cited examples that made aspects of the 112th's behavior at Baker Hill and George Hill seem daring by comparison. For instance, one would be hard pressed to suggest that the regiment "felt out an enemy position then settled down to wait it out," nor did the cavalymen overestimate the strength of the Japanese forces they engaged and use that error to rationalize their lethargy.<sup>86</sup> On the contrary, 2d Squadron pursued multiple avenues in its quest to crack the strongpoint. More fitting was the observation concerning "hesitancy on the part of infantry units to close with the enemy."<sup>87</sup> With added emphasis, the section concluded, "Infantry is the arm of *close combat*. It is the arm of *final* combat. The Jap is . . . most tenacious particularly in entrenched and concealed positions. . . . Although supporting arms are of great assistance, it ultimately becomes the task of the small infantry units to dig them out." To do this, American soldiers must be "aggressively led. . . . There can be no hesitancy on the part of his leaders."<sup>88</sup> Though not directed specifically at the 112th, this criticism seems appropriate in light of its performance during the regiment's two major confrontations in the Cordilleras.

Krueger's condemnation regarding the employment of assault parties hit close to the mark as well, but once again, the RCT was no more guilty than any other organization in Sixth Army. In a June 1944 directive, the general had ordered the formation of these special units in each infantry battalion and cavalry squadron so that elements under his command could deal more effectively with enemy fortified positions. Midway through the Leyte campaign, the G-3 tersely noted, "There is no known use of assault parties as indicated in Training Memorandum No. 18." With a smugness barely diluted by the mimeograph machine, he reminded subordinates that the "employment of assault parties as contemplated by Sixth Army is the result of much experience and careful consideration. If properly trained, assault parties constitute a powerful and efficient weapon at the disposal of the battalion commander."<sup>89</sup>

The charges were valid. There is no indication that the 112th used squadron assault parties as higher headquarters intended. McMains sent a bazooka team forward at George Hill but not as part of a special detachment. Grant recalled using his assault party late in the campaign, but his memory of the occasion suggests that he employed it primarily because his squadron was terribly understrength at the time. Thus, the team served as an additional platoon to maneuver rather than a unit employed in accordance with its unique capabilities to achieve a specific purpose. Trooper Nat Campos, an enlisted man in 1st Squadron's assault party, confirmed this. Though acknowledging that he and the others accompanied Grant in the field and were under his direct guidance, Campos could remember no instances when the team was called up to knock out a stubborn enemy position. Instead, he fancied himself in a much different billet – member of the lieutenant colonel's personal security detachment.<sup>90</sup> Even 2d of the 7th in its successful attack against George Hill appears to have relied on its traditional line troops, not an assault party. Like McMains and his bazooka team, the commander of 2d of the 7th employed two flamethrowers at the front but sent them forward as individuals.

As correct as Sixth Army's judgment was regarding the use (or "non-use") of assault parties, mentioning this shortcoming in a document along with a slew of other recommendations did little to change unit behavior. Higher headquarters persisted as the campaign progressed, though. An 11 December radio message to the 7th Cavalry Regiment requested information on the "status of assault teams," including "use of teams to date."<sup>91</sup> The unit log contains no response to the inquiry. The universal failure to adopt the assault party at battalion and squadron level sheds some light on the problems of instituting organizational change via memorandum. For Sixth Army, sending out the June training directive was the easy part. Staff officers expected units to faithfully execute the orders and, seeing as how the idea made a great deal of sense to them, saw no reason to doubt that they would. To a point, subordinates did. The 112th,

for its part, shuffled personnel around to create the teams and, according to Grant, even trained them at Aitape in the weeks before its deployment.<sup>92</sup> More difficult was the central task of ensuring that units applied the change as senior commanders envisioned it.

That said, Krueger's vision for a decisive multi-pronged offensive began to bear fruit shortly after it was launched. The 7 December landing of the 77th Infantry Division south of Ormoc broke the back of Leyte's defenders. As the American vise tightened, they were driven from Ormoc on the 10th and compelled to withdraw from the Cordilleras less than one week later. Advancing at a rate unseen since the opening days of the invasion, the lead units from X and XXIV Corps linked up on Highway 2 on 21 December. Under pressure from several directions, the last organized elements of the enemy retreated to the northwestern part of the island, where the operation ended for all intents and purposes on Christmas Day. Save for mopping-up the scattered remnants of the Japanese force, the Leyte operation was over.<sup>93</sup>

When Cunningham's RCT came within striking distance of the Ormoc Valley in mid-December, GIs sensed that the campaign had entered a new phase. With 2d Squadron halted at George Hill, Grant had pressed westward to the Leyte River. Having established contact with the 32d Infantry Division, 1st Squadron headed south on a course parallel with Highway 2.<sup>94</sup> As the troopers left the forested mountains behind them, the terrain became much more open. Men carrying the Thompson SMG – considered the best automatic weapon for close-in fighting – felt a little less useful. No longer envious of their “Tommy”-toting comrades, soldiers armed with the BAR finally enjoyed the advantages that came with its greater range. One private boasted about killing Japanese at four hundred yards, a non-existent possibility in a jungle environment. Bragging rights aside, the cavalrymen began to appreciate how changing conditions could cause such a swift turnaround in the relative value of their firearms. Squads realized the need for both types of weapons.<sup>95</sup>



The retreating opponent seemed much easier to find and kill, for instance. In scattered engagements, 1st Squadron killed twenty Japanese soldiers on 14 December and another fifteen the following day. Around this time, one of Grant's patrols detected a sizeable group of enemy infantry moving on a trail toward the Leyte River. As if on cue, Troop A responded quickly, hustling four hundred yards to an ambush site and setting up its machine guns in advance of the force's arrival. The result was a lop-sided slaughter in which the troop lost three wounded while killing seventy-five Japanese at close range.

For Grant, this was one of the two most memorable episodes of the campaign because it illustrated how adept his men had become at handling hasty encounters. In marked contrast to the other highlight – Baker Hill – the squadron commander saw the ambush as “fighting on our terms” and took pride in its skillful execution.<sup>96</sup> Other GIs shared this view, revealing the growing confidence they had in meeting the enemy when both sides were out of their foxholes. Most retained a healthy respect for the adversary but seemed taken aback by some behavior, such as the slipshod security of his bivouac areas. “When dug in and fighting according to his orders and plans, the Japanese was a most effective opponent,” noted the RCT historical report. “But he did not adjust well to a changed situation.”<sup>97</sup> One captain said that enemy soldiers “lacked aggressiveness.” Another officer, detecting this same shortcoming, ascribed it “to low morale in their ranks.”<sup>98</sup> This most certainly was the case for the Japanese in mid-December as their position around Ormoc crumbled.

For the next several days, 1st Squadron continued its operations, struggling to maintain contact with adjacent units as it pushed south and killing the enemy it discovered with direct and indirect fire. Eventually squeezed off the front line by the converging elements of the 32d Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions, Grant's organization assumed responsibility for patrolling just to their rear, and his detachments scoured the foothills and creek bottoms of the sector as far

south as Kananga until 30 December. At that point, the weary cavalymen of 1st Squadron began the long move back to the Leyte Valley – by tracked vehicles, thankfully – with Grant leading them from the passenger seat of a captured Japanese truck. Pulling into a base camp five miles southeast of Carigara that evening, they found the rest of the regiment waiting for them.<sup>99</sup>

“Everyone is pretty badly beaten up,” one replacement confided in his journal after watching several muddy, bleary-eyed cavalymen stagger into camp.<sup>100</sup> Though directed at the troopers of 2d Squadron following their relief at George Hill, this observation could have applied just as easily to the entire regiment at the end of the Leyte operation. Daily skirmishes, periodic enemy shelling, and the ordeal of fighting two major engagements against prepared Japanese positions had resulted in 27 men killed and 127 wounded. Another five had died of wounds.<sup>101</sup> All told, the regiment sustained fewer battle casualties than it did during the Driniumor campaign, but the hardships endured on Leyte could scarcely be quantified by such figures.

The effects of miserable weather and backbreaking terrain upon the unit were palpable. Weeks of slogging through ankle-deep mud over nearly vertical portions of the rugged landscape inevitably took their toll. Its men constantly wet, exposed nightly to the chill of the mist-cloaked mountains, and living on supplies that were practically consumed on arrival, the RCT noticed as early as 3 December an alarming rise in the number of non-battle casualties due to foot infections and “fevers of undetermined origin.” As the operation culminated in the Ormoc Valley, Grant felt compelled to send to the rear thirty-five enlisted men suffering from either dysentery or badly worn feet. Looking beyond the material realm, one brooding first sergeant reflected on the case of a soldier who had been evacuated for psychoneurosis and marveled, “How can anyone stand 30 months of this? Isn’t a man entitled to a rest ever? . . . It’s a wonder more don’t let go!”<sup>102</sup>

Though not physically taxing on senior leaders and their staffs, the campaign presented complex challenges for command and control. Multiple units advancing simultaneously across a broad front created a fluid situation. This, combined with the topography of the Cordilleras, made maneuver as a regiment simply impossible. Control could be maintained only through contact patrols rippling outward from the squadron CPs to seek the flanks of adjacent units. The issue of how to command elements dispersed over a sector of knotted ridges and ravines posed a particular problem for Miller, whose only means of travel was by foot. As a partial solution, he took a small headquarters detachment into the mountains, but this measure failed to free him from the tyranny of the terrain.<sup>103</sup>

It appears that the colonel made no more than a handful of visits to the front, but, for the most part, these came at crucial and appropriate times. Only his conspicuous absence during the fight at George Hill seems a bit puzzling on the surface. Miller did not arrive there until 9 December when the battle was all but over for 2d Squadron. Why this was so probably has much to do with the regimental commander's concern about keeping his forward units supplied. Hand-carrying rations and ammunition over the slick trails of the Cordilleras was hard enough. When Grant pressed further westward, it became necessary to supply his squadron by air, a complicated matter that seems to have subsumed much of Miller's thought and attention.<sup>104</sup> With combat operations occurring at squadron-level and below, an emphasis on logistics would have been well considered.

For similar reasons, Cunningham spent much of the campaign away from the front lines. Restricted overland movement and the imperative of coordinating resupply seemed to have kept the general at his CP.<sup>105</sup> So did the nature of dispersed operations, and here Cunningham faced a greater dilemma than Miller. Given such a wide-ranging area of responsibility, the RCT commander chose not to limit his personal mobility by camping out in the mountains. Instead,

he maintained his CP at Carigara, where he had access to the liaison planes assigned to artillery battalions firing from the northern Leyte Valley. Though overcast days no doubt thwarted some of his flight plans, Cunningham and his staff availed themselves of these planes when the weather permitted.<sup>106</sup>

The adequate radio communications that the RCT enjoyed for much of the campaign also allowed Cunningham to exercise command from Carigara. When Grant reached Highway 2 in early December, his squadron was still only seven or eight miles from the general's CP. A wireless relay station positioned on Baker Hill connected distant units when direct communications faltered, as did the versatile Piper Cubs after one ingenious cavalryman determined how to exploit their onboard radios by mounting a twenty-five-foot horizontal antenna onto each of the planes. This improvisation won praise from troop commanders, who subsequently found communications to be "excellent" – even with "isolated patrols . . . operating in deep valleys and behind hill masses."<sup>107</sup>

The RCT's ability to communicate with forward units suffered after higher headquarters ordered a move to Jaro on 16 December. This relocation placed the CP further south into the Leyte Valley and nearly doubled its distance from 1st Squadron. The fact that this disruption came at a sensitive time in the campaign complicated matters. When its elements broke out of the Cordilleras into the Ormoc Valley and headed south toward the other pincer of Sixth Army's vise, X Corps became more concerned with controlling the pace of the advance and consequently ratcheted up the level of urgency associated with its inquiries on progress. Sandwiched between the 32d Infantry and 1st Cavalry Divisions, the 112th served as the linchpin joining the two units and, as a separate RCT, found itself coming out on the losing side of the blame game whenever corps voiced its dissatisfaction.<sup>108</sup> Cunningham had been forced to yield already on one thorny issue. On 11 December, he gave up three hundred men to support

the load-out for Sixth Army's Mindoro operation. All of this made the general more conscious of the need to protect the 112th's interests (as well as his own), especially at this tense stage of the campaign. Unable to talk reliably with Grant and Miller near the front, he went there himself on 17 December to better influence the action.<sup>109</sup>

Cunningham's move to Miller's forward CP turned out poorly for the three senior leaders involved. As if the leadership stresses that came with the grueling Leyte operation were not enough, the increasingly frequent calls to report the status and location of his units tried Grant's patience as the days passed. Yet this requirement was a mere nuisance compared to the general's now personal involvement in 1st Squadron's daily activities. In this scenario, the naturally quiet Miller became nothing more than a conduit of information, passing Cunningham's specific demands to a coolly receptive Grant, who saw them as downright meddling. For his part, the RCT commander may have enjoyed rattling cages personally for a while, but a Japanese sniper made his visit to the front a short one. Shot in the leg on 19 December, he was evacuated to a 32d Infantry Division aid station and thence to the Leyte Valley, where he recovered in time for the invasion of Luzon. The occasion of the general's wound reminded Grant that everyone would have been better off if Cunningham had limited the extent of his personal reconnaissance to Cub flights.<sup>110</sup>

The conclusion of the operation brought with it not only a period of recuperation but also one of institutionalized reflection as the unit tried to determine what it had learned in this recent fight against the Japanese. At the troop level, leaders collected written comments from GIs of all stripes – both officer and enlisted, replacement and veteran alike. These insights were forwarded up the channels to regiment, where the staff consolidated and reviewed them with an eye towards shaping future training. Submitted to Sixth Army as part of the mandatory historical report of the campaign, the resulting document was a remarkable compilation of stolid

observations, honest criticism, and poignant rants against the chain of command. Culled from a cross-section of the organization, the lessons accurately captured the 112th's experience on Leyte.

Many comments conveyed the challenges of staying alive and healthy in a dangerous and alien environment. The problem of being constantly wet led some to advocate the lavish application of foot powder over the entire body, and troopers resigned to the fact that their feet would never be dry found rinsing socks in clear water and wearing them wet to be the next best thing. Aware that losses due to bad feet could rapidly "ascend to as high as 25 percent of the command," officers thought "fresh shoes and socks should hold the same priority as food" in the unit supply system.<sup>111</sup> In the matter of foot care, one sergeant emphasized the basic responsibility of leaders in a way only his fellow old-timers could understand: "Take the same amount of time to check your men as you would checking your horses."<sup>112</sup> Some habits died hard.

Veterans were quick to note how much the recent arrivals still had to learn about maintaining security, and junior officers expressed disappointment that the new soldiers lacked training in such fundamentals as camouflage, noise and light discipline, and care of weapons. However, a corporal took comfort in believing that "the older men know what to do and . . . do all in their power to help the green men get battle-wise in the shortest time possible."<sup>113</sup> Judging from what a few of the privates discovered about surviving on patrol or in a defensive perimeter at night, it seems that there was some reason for optimism. Combat was a teacher most men took seriously. As one newcomer admitted, "I never realized the importance of the things we were taught in garrison training until I was up there in the hills."<sup>114</sup>

The 112th's major engagements had shown that insufficient training came with a cost. The campaign provided fertile ground for harvesting lessons learned in the RCT's conduct of

offensive operations, particularly as it pertained to movement across rugged terrain and attacks on prepared positions. Seeing reconnaissance as a crucial element in a successful advance, officers and men harshly criticized the regiment's limited capacity for coordinating patrols and using them to best support the maneuver of larger units. Lieutenants and privates alike claimed that headquarters failed to brief them adequately on the situation, dispatched them to locations recently covered by other detachments, and then ignored their reports when they returned. Those of higher rank shared some of these sentiments and believed that the most valuable instrument of reconnaissance – the three-man patrol – was rarely given time to perform its mission. With so much depending on the quality of information such detachments could provide, one captain viewed the time afforded to thorough reconnaissance as a worthwhile investment.<sup>115</sup>

Reflecting on their battles up the slopes of Baker Hill and George Hill, several cavalymen decided that efforts to destroy Japanese fortifications suffered from an ineffective use of supporting fires. While quick to acknowledge the superiority of American artillery, some suggested basic organizational improvements, like the inclusion of additional forward observers in the line troops. Others saw a training problem and criticized their officers' ability to call for and adjust mortar fire. Captain George C. Thomas offered a more perceptive critique. Looking back on the defensive engagements of the Arawe and Driniumor campaigns, he pointed out that the 112th had demonstrated its aptitude for bringing indirect fire to bear on the enemy at very close ranges. He argued that the same devastating effects could be achieved in offensive operations if more leaders understood the capabilities of each squadron's weapons troop. Exploiting available firepower through "the continuous and intelligent employment of our heavy weapons, especially mortars, will make almost every objective far easier to take and will save many lives."<sup>116</sup>

Few would dispute the essence of Thomas' statement. Given the emphasis that firepower received in U.S. doctrine, the tendency for GIs to think along these lines was not surprising. Captain Leonard Johnson of Baker Hill renown would add that maneuver was equally important. In his write-up following the Leyte campaign, the Troop B commander believed that the regiment needed to put "more venturesome tactics" into practice.<sup>117</sup> Quite aware of the difficulties posed by the enemy and terrain, he could not have been suggesting that the solution lay simply in adopting a more energetic version of the frontal assaults attempted by 1st and, later, 2d Squadron. Though what Johnson meant is not precisely clear, it is reasonable to suppose that he had in mind something like 2d of the 7th's tactics at George Hill – infiltrating by night, striking a forceful blow upon the enemy's rear, and employing close fires as a precursor to a coordinated, sustained assault beginning within hand-grenade range and drawing upon every weapon in a unit's arsenal, to include flamethrowers. If Baker Hill showed that successful attacks required ample fire support, then George Hill illustrated that firepower alone was not enough against the toughest dug-in defenses.

The 112th trained during its period of recovery at Aitape, but senior leaders failed to train sufficiently the tasks that would best prepare their units for the most difficult aspects of offensive operations on Leyte. Experience could not compensate for this shortcoming. Confronting Japanese strongpoints in the Cordilleras, the regiment found the well of its own experience dry. When it came time to draw water on Luzon, perhaps the lessons learned on Leyte would provide the necessary replenishment.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Charles W. Roberts to Walter Krueger, 17 January 1945, File 44 (Personnel File #1), Box 7, Krueger Papers, United States Military Academy, West Point, NY. Krueger responded with a letter dated 11 February 1945, located in the same file. Roberts' letter to the general is actually dated incorrectly. The year 1944 in its heading is obviously an error.

<sup>2</sup> Hooper interview, 70, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>3</sup> Miller Journal, 1 November 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>4</sup> "Regimental Diary," 2-3 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>5</sup> "Regimental Diary," 4-14 November 1944, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 5-9 November 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>6</sup> Stanley L. Falk, *Decision at Leyte* (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1966), 65.

<sup>7</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 5-6, RG 407, NA; Gordon L. Rottman, *World War II Pacific Island Guide: A Geo-Military Study* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002), 290-92.

<sup>8</sup> For an overview of the planning and activities leading to this decision, see Cannon, *Leyte*, 7-8; Maurice Matloff, *United States Army in World War II: The War in the Pacific: Strategic Planning for Coalition Warfare, 1943-1944* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1959), 479-87; and Smith, *Approach to the Philippines*, 450-53. The JCS altered the original timeline largely because of reports from Halsey's Third Fleet. See William F. Halsey and Joseph Bryan, III, *Admiral Halsey's Story* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1947), 199; and Cannon, *Leyte*, 8-9.

<sup>9</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 3, 32-40, RG 407, NA.

<sup>10</sup> Falk, *Decision at Leyte*, 221, 224-25.

<sup>11</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 43-45, 49-50, 57, 61, 200, RG 427, NA. Krueger's decision to delay the advance toward Ormoc is the most contentious issue of the campaign. It is most harshly criticized in Spector, *Eagle Against the Sun*, 513-14. For a favorable and convincing explanation of the Sixth Army commander's actions on Leyte, see Leary, *We Shall Return*, 75-76. See also Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA*, 169-72, where the author argues that Krueger's decision was "probably correct" but nevertheless prolonged the campaign.

<sup>12</sup> Grant interview, 12-13, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>13</sup> "Regimental Diary," 14-17 November 1944; "Historical Report (Leyte)," 2; HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, "S-2-3 Report, 17 November 1944 to 30 December 1944," 1, Patrol Reports, Leyte, CAVR-112-SQ(1)-2.11, Box 18094, Entry 427 [hereafter "1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (Leyte)"]; all in RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 14-17 November 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>14</sup> Grant interview, 13-14, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>15</sup> Fyke, "Memoirs," 22, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>16</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 14 November 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, “Strength of Command By Unit or Attachment,” 22 November 1944, S-1 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18083, Entry 427, *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> More than likely the 112th fought against elements of the 41st Infantry Regiment of the 30th Division. Units from the 102d Division are another possibility. Sailing from other islands in the central Philippines, battalions from these divisions reinforced Leyte in the days immediately following the U.S. invasion. See HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-2 Periodic Report No. 46, 5 December 1944, Item No. 1764 (1st Cavalry Division, G-2 Periodic Reports, 21 October 1944-6 January 1945), United States Army Armor School Research Library, Fort Knox, KY [hereafter USAASRL]; and Cannon, *Leyte*, 99.

On 30 November, the 112th captured a Japanese soldier from the 41st Infantry Regiment. He was lost and had gone without food for five days. Filled with resentment toward his former comrades, the prisoner volunteered to lead an American patrol back to his unit’s bivouac site. The attempt was made, but it bore no fruit. Lost in the first place, he probably was not very much help. See HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Report No. 14, 30 November 1944, S-2 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18083, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>18</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 19-20 November 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, Field Order No. 1, 18 November 1944, Field Orders, CAVR-112-3.9, Box 18093, Entry 427, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th RCT, Field Order No. 2, 22 November 1944, 1, Patrol Reports, Leyte, CAVR-112-SQ(1)-2.11, Box 18094, Entry 427, *ibid.*; Miller Journal, 19 November 1944, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>19</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 16 November 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 2, 4, *ibid.* The quotation appears on p. 4 of the historical report.

<sup>20</sup> “Historical Report (Leyte),” 2-3, RG 407, NA; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (Leyte),” 1-3, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 33, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>22</sup> “Historical Report (Leyte), 3, RG 407, NA; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (Leyte),” 2-4, *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 19, 23 November 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, Field Order No. 2, 22 November 1944, *ibid.* As it turned out, the tanks were reassigned elsewhere before the 112th ever had a chance to employ them.

<sup>24</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 24 November 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 3, *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> Grant interview, 16, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>26</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 24 November 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Report No. 8, 24 November 1944, *ibid.*; HQ, 24th Infantry Division, “Narrative of Operations,” Leyte Historical Report of the 24th Infantry Division Landing Team, 20 October 1944-25 December 1944, 71, N-11331-4, Combined Arms Research Library, Fort Leavenworth, KS [hereafter CARL].

<sup>27</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 24-25 November 1944, RG 407, NA; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (Leyte),” 5, *ibid.*

<sup>28</sup> Except where noted otherwise, my account of 1st Squadron’s attack is based on the “Regimental Diary,” 25 November 1944; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 4; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (Leyte),” 5; and HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Report No. 9, 25 November 1944; all in RG 407, NA.

<sup>29</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 25 November 1944, RG 407, NA. The diary entry includes a transcription of Johnson’s written statement on the battle.

<sup>30</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Report No. 9, 25 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>31</sup> “1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (Leyte),” 5, RG 407, NA.

<sup>32</sup> Wright, *1st Cavalry Division*, 85. Johnson sized up the infantrymen and, for some reason, was not comfortable with what he saw. He decided that, at the time, they were incapable of conducting an assault. See his statement in “Regimental Diary,” 25 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>33</sup> Wright, *1st Cavalry Division*, 85. Of all the sources, only Wright notes that Johnson was wounded.

<sup>34</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, S-2-3 Journal, 25 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, 26 November 1944.

<sup>36</sup> Grant interview, 15, 17, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>37</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 26 November 1944; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 4; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 5; all in RG 407, NA.

<sup>38</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 25 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>39</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, “Report of the Leyte Operation,” 227, RG 407, NA; HQ, Sixth Army, “Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned in K-2 Operation,” 25 November 1944, 18-19, General Krueger’s Official File, Box 7, Krueger Papers.

<sup>40</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 25 November 1944, RG 407, NA. For an account of the activity occurring throughout the division’s sector from 23-26 November, see HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, “Historical Report of the 1st Cavalry Division, K-2 Operation, 20 October to 25 December 1944,” 4 March 1945, 36-41, R-11214, CARL.

<sup>41</sup> This was because the ridge ran from north to south and lay perpendicular to the imaginary line connecting this piece of terrain with the howitzer batteries shooting at it from an easterly direction. Error in the trajectory of an artillery round is most pronounced along this line, causing the projectile to fall long or short of the target more often than to the right or left. Rarely is indirect fire totally accurate. In high-angled terrain, even a slight error can result in a round impacting far enough away so as to have no effect on the target. What this meant for 1st Squadron during its 25 November assault was that most of its artillery support probably sailed harmlessly over the crest of the ridge or landed some distance downhill, where dense vegetation swallowed up the explosion.

<sup>42</sup> “Historical Report (Leyte),” 4, RG 407, NA; McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 34, Dunlap Collection; Wright, *1st Cavalry Division*, 84.

<sup>43</sup> McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 33-34, Dunlap Collection; “Regimental Diary,” 26 November 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 4, *ibid.*; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 6, *ibid.*

<sup>44</sup> McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 34, Dunlap Collection; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 4, RG 407, NA; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 6, *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 83-84, RG 407, NA; Wesley F. Craven and James L. Cate, *The Army Air Forces in World War II*, vol. 5, *The Pacific: Matterhorn to Nagasaki, June 1944 to August 1945* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1953), 369-75.

<sup>46</sup> "Regimental Diary," 24 November 1944, RG 407, NA. The Japanese attacked the Tacloban airfield and harbor facilities on 24 November with a force of 26 bombers, which destroyed 3 U.S. aircraft, damaged 6 others, and sank a cargo ship. The planes that the 112th observed were most likely part of this force. Craven and Cate, *Matterhorn to Nagasaki*, 375.

<sup>47</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 62, RG 407, NA; Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon*, 194.

<sup>48</sup> For a summary of the Japanese effort to reinforce Leyte, see HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 70, 83, RG 407, NA. Edward Drea lays out a more detailed picture and demonstrates the effects of inaccurate intelligence (Drea, *MacArthur's ULTRA*, 168-78). The Japanese counterattack was a complicated plan intended to be a coordinated airborne-ground assault using special units flown from Luzon and elements of the divisions on Leyte. Known as the WA Operation, it was little more than a glorified raid. Disorganized and under-resourced, it had even struck at airfields no longer in use. Falk, *Decision at Leyte*, 241-42, 255-56, 260-63, 272-85.

<sup>49</sup> See HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 57-62, RG 407, NA; Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon*, 172-79.

<sup>50</sup> "Regimental Diary," 2-28 November 1944; "Historical Report (Leyte)," 4; "1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte)," 6; all in RG 407, NA.

<sup>51</sup> McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 35, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>52</sup> "Regimental Diary," 29 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, 23-24 November, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Leyte)," 5, *ibid.* With the opening of Highway 2 later in the campaign, LVTs assumed a more prominent role in resupply. See "Historical Report (Leyte)," 10, RG 407, NA.

<sup>54</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, "Supply of Troops by L-4 Aircraft," 1-3, Annex 1 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," 5 January 1945, G-2 Memoranda and Papers, 1943-1945, CAVR-112-2.18, Box 18092, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. Quote found on p. 3.

<sup>55</sup> "Historical Report (Leyte)," 6, RG 407, NA.

<sup>56</sup> "Regimental Diary," 27, 30 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>57</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Report of the Leyte Operation," 278-79, RG 407, NA; HQ, 24th Infantry Division, "Division Civil Affairs Office Report (Annex 13)," Leyte Historical Report of the 24th Infantry Division Landing Team, 20 October 1944-25 December 1944, 148, N-11331-4, CARL.

The unfamiliar challenges associated with the presence of a large civilian population affected several sections of the Sixth Army staff. Not only the civil affairs officer but also the G-2 and the surgeon identified issues in a mid-campaign assessment of American military performance on Leyte. See HQ, Sixth Army, "Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned in K-2 Operation," 2, 22-24, 33, Krueger Papers. In its sector, the 1st Cavalry Division found the refugee problem initially beyond the capabilities of U.S. civil affairs units (Wright, *1st Cavalry Division*, 76-78).

<sup>58</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 20, 29 November 1944, 3 December 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 4, *ibid.* The disappointing performance of the medical collecting company attached to the RCT added to Miller’s troubles. When the command group relocated to the mountains in early December, thirty-odd stretcher-bearers began the journey. More than half turned back, and leaders could find no evidence that they had relieved those troopers trudging past them hauling litters to the rear. As much as they detested this apparent malingering, the cavalymen could understand the motivations behind it. In the sharp, rain-soaked terrain, it took ration carriers five hours to traverse three miles. The rate for litter squads was even slower. Staff officers from the RCT and the 1st Medical Squadron attempted later to sort out the expectations related to support for casualty evacuation, but, until then, the 112th had to assume much of this duty itself. “Regimental Diary,” 3, 7 December 1944, RG 407, NA. For the rate of travel in the Cordilleras, see Wright, *1st Cavalry Division*, 87.

<sup>59</sup> Melvin J. Waite, “The Journal of Melvin J. Waite,” 1995, 3, Dunlap Collection. This daily journal was transcribed from Waite’s shorthand in 1995. For the number of replacements joining the 112th, see HQ, 112th RCT, General Summary, S-1 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18083, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>60</sup> Waite Journal, 3, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>61</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 29 November 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>62</sup> *Ibid.*, 30 November 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 5, *ibid.* The 112th described the terrain in front of 2d Squadron as a “finger ridge.”

<sup>63</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 1-2 December 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 3 December 1944.

<sup>65</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-3 December 1944. The 2 December entry mentions the bazooka team. See also the 6 December 1944 entry, which elaborates further on the terrain and the impact it had on the cavalymen’s advance.

<sup>66</sup> The 112th’s regimental diary, historical report, and S-2 periodic reports for 1-3 December explicitly mention only seven to eight casualties (the bazooka team on 2 December and one killed, five wounded in action on 3 December). While 2d Squadron may have suffered additional losses from offensive action during the period, it is unlikely that the amount was more than a handful. Most casualties occurred due to enemy shelling or counterattacks during this time.

<sup>67</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 1-3 December 1944; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 5-6; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 8; all in RG 407, NA 407, NA.

<sup>68</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 29 November-3 December 1944; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 5-6; HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Reports No. 15 and 16, 1-2 December 1944; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 7; all in RG 407, NA. For the 112th’s perspective on the characteristics of Japanese artillery use during the Leyte campaign, see HQ, 112th RCT, “Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte,” 3-4, RG 407, NA. McMains recalled the terrible effects of tree bursts (McMains interview, 68-69, Dunlap Collection).

1st Cavalry Division reports note the Japanese vehicles and equipment observed around Lonoy and Kakanga during this time. Observers described this area as a “beehive of enemy activity.” See HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-2 Periodic Reports No. 46 and 47, 5-6 December 1944, USAASRL.

<sup>69</sup> HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-2 Periodic Report No. 46, 5 December 1944, USAASRL; “Regimental Diary,” 4-6 December 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 6, *ibid.*

<sup>70</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 6 December 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>71</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 7-9 December 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 7, *ibid.*; HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-2 Periodic Reports No. 49 and 52, 8, 11 December 1944, USAASRL.

<sup>72</sup> HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Operations Report No. 54, 13 December 1944, Item No. 1768 (1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Daily Operations Reports, 19 October 1944-26 December 1944), USAASRL; HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Journal, 11-14 December 1944, Item No. 1767 (1st Cavalry Division, Journal (G-3), 24 September 1944-26 December 1944), *ibid.*; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 8, RG 407, NA; Wright, *1st Cavalry Division*, 91-92. Quote found in HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Operations Report No. 56, 15 December 1944, USAASRL.

The attachment of a reinforced 4.2-inch mortar platoon from the 85th Chemical Battalion to the 112th RCT became effective the evening of 10 December, shortly after the destruction of a strongpoint in the sector of 1st Cavalry Division’s 12th Regiment. Most likely, it took so long to move these weapons into supporting range of the RCT because several of the heavy mortar platoons lacked their own organic transport. Furthermore, movement over the roads was still difficult due to the persistent rains. See HQ, Sixth Army, “Report of the Leyte Operation,” 236, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Report No. 27, 13 December 1944, *ibid.*; HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-2 Periodic Report No. 52, 11 December 1944, USAASRL; HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, Field Order No. 17, 10 December 1944, Item No. 2516 (Historical Report, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 20 October 1944-25 December 1944), *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Journal, 14 December 1944, USAASRL; HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Report No. 28, 14 December 1944, RG 407, NA; Wright, *1st Cavalry Division*, 92. In the narrative of its historical report, the 7th Cavalry refers to the highly-contested terrain as George Hill. HQ, 7th Cavalry Regiment, “Historical Report of Seventh Cavalry, Leyte Island Campaign,” 11, Item No. 2516 (Historical Report, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 20 October 1944-25 December 1944), CARL.

<sup>74</sup> For Troop B’s casualties at Baker Hill, see “Regimental Diary,” 24-25 November 1944. Excluding losses due to artillery, 2d Squadron suffered nine killed and thirty-six wounded in its fight against the George Hill strongpoint. “Regimental Diary,” 3 December 1944; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 5-6; HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Reports No. 15-23, 1-9 December 1944; all in RG 407, NA.

<sup>75</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 8 December 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>76</sup> *Ibid.*, 9 December 1944.

<sup>77</sup> HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, “Historical Report, K-2 Operation,” 5, CARL.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, 5-7. For overviews of the 1st Cavalry Division’s role in the Admiralties campaign, see Miller, *CARTWHEEL*, 316-50; Taaffe, *MacArthur’s Jungle War*, 59, 62-73.

<sup>79</sup> Walter Krueger to Commanding General, U.S. Forces, APO 324, 28 March 1944, Congratulatory Radios, Box 7, Krueger Papers.

<sup>80</sup> After the war, the Sixth Army commander ranked the 1st Cavalry Division second behind the 32d Infantry in a list recommending those units most deserving of citations. In a list of regiments, he included the 1st Cavalry’s 5th and 12th Regiments for their performance on the Admiralties and Leyte respectively. Walter Krueger to Commander-in-Chief, Army Forces, Pacific, 26 August 1946, Correspondence, 19 July-31 August 1946, Box 10, Krueger Papers.

<sup>81</sup> Two weeks before he sent his congratulations to the 1st Cavalry Division for its “brilliant performance,” “gallantry and indomitable spirit,” Krueger radioed a more modest message to Cunningham, praising the 112th for its “fine performance” and thanking it for “contributing to complete victory . . . in western New Britain.” See Krueger to CG, U.S. Forces, APO 324, 28 March 1944; and Walter Krueger to Commanding General, U.S. Forces, APO 323, 13 March 1944, Congratulatory Radios, Box 7; both in Krueger Papers. After the Driniumor campaign, much of the praise from higher headquarters seemed to go to the 124th Infantry Regiment for ending the battle with a “counter-envelopment” through the jungle – a feat trumpeted by SWPA as “unparalleled in the history of military maneuver.” PTF, Report After Action, 19, RG 407, NA.

<sup>82</sup> HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, “Historical Report, K-2 Operation,” 8, CARL.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>84</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, “Report of the Leyte Operation,” 152, RG 407, NA.

<sup>85</sup> William C. Chase, *Front Line General* (Houston: Gulf Publishing Company, 1975), 80.

<sup>86</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, “Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned in the K-2 Operation,” 6, Krueger Papers. This lengthy self-critique of Sixth Army’s performance led one historian to offer it as evidence that Krueger’s forces had been inadequately trained. Krueger’s most recent biographer addresses this charge in Holzimmer, “A Soldier’s Soldier,” 503-507, 559n.

<sup>87</sup> *Ibid.*, 5.

<sup>88</sup> *Ibid.*, 6. Emphasis is Krueger’s.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*, 4.

<sup>90</sup> Grant interview, 23, Dunlap Collection; Campos interview, author’s collection.

<sup>91</sup> HQ, 7th Cavalry Regiment, “S-2-3 Journal,” 137, Item No. 2516 (Historical Report, 7th Cavalry Regiment, 20 October 1944-25 December 1944), USAASRL.

<sup>92</sup> Grant interview, 9. In the Luzon campaign, the pattern of employment for the squadron assault parties remained similar to that on Leyte. The squadron assault parties continued to exist as separate formations and assignment to the units was still selective (Waite Journal, 25, Dunlap Collection). However, they were not used to eliminate Japanese fortifications. Commanders instead found a more of a need for them to share the burden of patrolling expansive sectors. Their employment in this manner was also a response to complaints from men in the line troops that squadron assault parties just sat around the CP. Campos interview, author’s collection.

<sup>93</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, “Report of the Leyte Operation,” 72, 79-83, RG 407, NA.

<sup>94</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 14 December 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 9-10, *ibid.*

<sup>95</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, “Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte,” 1, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, “Individual Viewpoints,” 1, Annex 3 to “Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte,” *ibid.* In a related issue, leaders wished they had access to a more flexible supply system. The blankets that had warmed them during the cold nights at high altitudes were now nothing but extra weight, and the machetes lugged around by every rifleman seemed equally superfluous. Officers noted in retrospect that it would have been

convenient to exchange these pieces of gear for additional pairs of field glasses, now quite handy given the greater limits of observation in the Ormoc Valley.

<sup>96</sup> “Historical Report (Leyte),” 9, RG 407, NA; Grant interview, 21-22, 45, Dunlap Collection (quote on p. 45).

<sup>97</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, “Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte,” 3, RG 407, NA.

<sup>98</sup> The first quote (Leonard Johnson’s) is from HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in the Leyte Campaign,” 4 January 1945, Lessons Learned, Leyte Campaign, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; the second appears in HQ, 112th RCT, “Individual Viewpoints,” 2, Annex 3 to “Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte,” *ibid.*

<sup>99</sup> “Historical Report (Leyte),” 10-12, RG 407, NA; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 26, *ibid.*; Grant interview, 26, Dunlap Collection. Troop G was not present to greet Grant’s battered squadron when it returned to the 112th’s base area. Shortly after withdrawing from George Hill, the men of this troop learned that they had been selected to fill a tasking as the security element for SWPA headquarters. For the RCT, this meant the organization would be without one of its rifle troops for nearly two months of the Luzon campaign. For many of the cavalymen in Troop G however, being a part of MacArthur’s security detail was the highlight of their wartime experience. In his memoirs, William McDonnell entitled the chapter describing this portion of his service “The Gravy Train.” McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 38-41, Dunlap Collection. See also Grant interview, 48-49, *ibid.*; and McMains interview, 95, *ibid.*

<sup>100</sup> Waite Journal, 6, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>101</sup> “Historical Report (Leyte),” 12, RG 407, NA.

<sup>102</sup> Waite Journal, 11, Dunlap Collection; “Historical Report (Leyte),” 6, RG 407, NA; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 21, *ibid.*

<sup>103</sup> Miller Journal, 1 December 1944, Dunlap Collection; Hooper interview, 70-71.

<sup>104</sup> See Miller’s instructions to Grant as described in “Regimental Diary,” 3 December, RG 407, NA; and “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 8, *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> See “Regimental Diary,” 12 December 1944, RG 407, NA. Around 12 December 1944, Cunningham sent his S-4 west along the coastal road to the village of Pinamopoa, where Highway 2 turned south and ran through Limon and Lonoy, and eventually to Ormoc. When the 32d Infantry Division’s successful advance opened Highway 2 around this time, the RCT focused on supplying 1st Squadron overland by this route. Shifting the line of communication in this manner apparently required command emphasis and staff coordination. On 13 December, Cunningham personally requested that Grant report the time of arrival for the provisions coming from Limon and to keep him informed as to the squadron’s supply status. “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 16-18, RG 407, NA.

<sup>106</sup> *Ibid.*, 11, 13 December 1944; “1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte),” 17, RG 407, NA. The general conducted a personal reconnaissance of the front on 11 December and, on the next two days, sent out his executive officer and S-3 to drop messages to 1st Squadron and to confirm unit locations.

<sup>107</sup> Quote in HQ, 112th RCT, “Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte,” 2, RG 407, NA. The commanders from Troops B and C express their praise in HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in the Leyte Campaign,” *ibid.* See also “Regimental Diary,” 28 November 1944, *ibid.*; Hooper



interview, 86, Dunlap Collection. Sixth Army rated communications among echelons excellent, as well. HQ, Sixth Army, "Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned in K-2 Operation," 32, Krueger Papers.

<sup>108</sup> HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Journal, 13 December 1944, USAASRL; "Historical Report (Leyte)," 9, 11, RG 407, NA; Hooper interview, 77-78, 84-85, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>109</sup> HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Journal, 9 December 1944, USAASRL; "Historical Report (Leyte)," 10, RG 407, NA.

<sup>110</sup> "Historical Report (Leyte)," 10, RG 407, NA; Grant interview, 19, 23-24, Dunlap Collection. 1st Squadron's S-2-3 Journal reflects the increasing level of scrutiny Grant's activity received. On 12 December, the RCT XO flying overhead in a Piper Cub asked, "Why didn't Red 6 [Grant] occupy the ground shelled by artillery this morning?" On the 13th, higher headquarters reminded Grant multiple times to stay abreast of the 126th Infantry. On the 14th, the RCT inquired, "What are C and B Troop doing and where are they?" Boundary changes, new supply arrangements, and poor visibility due to fog added to the problems of coordinating forward movement on the extreme end of 1st Cavalry Division's right flank. See "1st Squadron S-2-3 Journal (Leyte)," 15-20, RG 407, NA.

<sup>111</sup> Quotes from Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign," 4 January 1945, Lessons Learned, Leyte Campaign, CAVR-112-3.01, Box 18093, Entry 427; and HQ, 112th RCT, "Individual Viewpoints," 5, Annex 3 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte." See also HQ, 112th RCT, "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," 2. All in RG 407, NA.

<sup>112</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, "Individual Viewpoints," 4, Annex 3 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," RG 407, NA.

<sup>113</sup> Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign," RG 407, NA.

<sup>114</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, "Individual Viewpoints," 3-4, Annex 3 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," RG 407, NA. Quote on p. 4.

<sup>115</sup> *Ibid.*, 2-3; HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in the Leyte Campaign," RG 407, NA; Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign," *ibid.*

<sup>116</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, "Individual Viewpoints," 2, Annex 3 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," RG 407, NA; HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in the Leyte Campaign," *ibid.*; Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign," *ibid.*

<sup>117</sup> HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in the Leyte Campaign," RG 407, NA.

## CHAPTER VII

### COMBAT ON LUZON: LEARNING AND THE LESSONS OF EXPERIENCE

For the troopers of the 112th, the learning curve for defensive operations on Luzon was not particularly steep. The experiences of Arawe and the Driniumor had taught them much, and the regiment could rely on the lessons of those campaigns as it confronted Japanese threats it had faced before, namely frequent attempts at infiltration and the occasional platoon or company-sized assault. Still, there were new tests to meet. Its missions on Luzon required the unit to operate over a much broader area than ever before. More notably, enemy artillery presented the cavalymen with a problem that until February 1945 had never been a terrible concern. Despite this unfamiliar menace, some leaders found that experience served as a springboard for adaptation. Yet, biases and expectations formed earlier could also hinder the acceptance of innovative techniques. Elements of the organization encountered obstacles to the interpretation of new knowledge, but the regiment generally adapted well, validating previous lessons learned on perimeter defense while developing new techniques to deal with new challenges.

During its short-lived recovery between the Leyte and Luzon campaigns, the regiment focused on improving performance at the individual and crew level. Recent combat had revealed several shortcomings with the conduct of platoon and troop tasks, but senior officers expected to remain at their Leyte Valley base camp for only two weeks. There would be time to talk about lessons learned yet little chance to incorporate the more complicated ones into small unit collective training. Training, at any rate, would be wishful thinking according to some troopers. Leyte had thoroughly worn out the men, and more than one had expressed his doubts about the ability of the 112th to conduct combat operations without first undergoing an extended

period of rest.<sup>1</sup> Commanders discussed how to make the best use of the time available, and the regiment published a training schedule reflecting their guidance.

As they had in the past, leaders sought a balance between recuperating from the last fight and preparing for the next one. Efforts during the first days of January were devoted to making camp conditions more accommodating and running the troopers through a battery of inspections to check arms, equipment, and vehicles. Officers taught classes on personal hygiene, malaria control, and venereal disease. This last topic addressed a relatively new threat, and its inclusion reflected an understanding that the Philippines were a far cry from the sparsely inhabited coastal jungles of New Guinea. Campaigning in Leyte and Luzon thus constituted something of a return to “civilization.” Apparently, the need for increasing the cavalymen’s awareness of venereal disease had grown alongside their odds of contracting it. The initial week of recovery also saw the hasty construction of ranges in the local area, followed by several sessions during which troopers fired their assigned individual and crew-served weapons, to include mortars, heavy machine guns, and hand grenades. Interspersed throughout the schedule were designated rest periods, award ceremonies, and evening movies. This brief respite drew to a close with the receipt of movement orders on 9 January.<sup>2</sup>

The 112th broke camp a few days later and moved by truck to Leyte’s east coast, where it completed loading on 18 January and began the three-day voyage to Luzon at dawn on the 24th. By this point, the cavalymen were well accustomed to intra-theater travel. They accepted the U.S. Navy’s ice cream as a welcome surprise, but there was nothing new about the succession of abandon-ship exercises, debarkation drills, and inspections. As usual, leaders invested some time in last-minute preparation for the upcoming campaign. In addition to refresher training on weapons employment, patrolling techniques, and rendering patrol reports, soldiers received briefings on the tactical situation. Classes on the roles of civil affairs and

counter-intelligence detachments hinted that the regiment's responsibilities in the coming months would involve more than just killing and capturing the Japanese.<sup>3</sup>

By the time the RCT arrived on the morning of 27 January, Sixth Army had been fighting on Luzon for over two weeks. Landing at Lingayen Gulf on 9 January, elements of Krueger's forces advanced through the wide corridor of the Central Plains toward Manila, some 120 miles to the south. After two weeks of successful offensive action on Luzon, Sixth Army had secured its base area as well as key terrain that controlled access to the Central Plain. These gains, plus the arrival of reinforcements, set the conditions for an all-out drive on the capital city, a move that would bring U.S. forces into contact with the eighty thousand men of Shimbu Group. One of three sizeable enemy concentrations on the island, its units defended the southern half of Luzon, including the area east of Manila.<sup>4</sup> Throughout the campaign, GIs of the 112th would find themselves engaged with soldiers belonging to this group.

After debarking, the RCT moved inland by truck and spent the first week of February as the Sixth Army reserve. In this capacity, Cunningham's men saw little combat but nevertheless stayed busy around their base camp at Guimba. Forty miles south into the Central Plains, this town sat astride a lateral road connecting Highways 3 and 5, two well-traveled north-south routes leading to Manila. Upon the unit's arrival, security patrols in jeeps fanned out to the surrounding barrios. Over the course of nine days, these detachments encountered the enemy no more than twice and then only in small numbers. Out of convenience or necessity, Krueger tapped his already minimal reserve for a work detail, ordering the RCT to provide nearly 150 soldiers to unload ammunition for several days on the beach at Lingayen Gulf.

Units remaining at Guimba took the opportunity to prepare for their next battle with the Japanese. Troops constructed a weapons range and rotated their machine-gun crews through a number of live-fire iterations. Officers drilled their men on small-unit tactics in a new

environment characterized by the comparatively open terrain of the Central Plains. Since initial patrols had alerted the regiment to the active presence of guerrillas in the area, leaders conducting training also emphasized the need for coordination with these outfits. Staff officers stayed abreast of the situation at the front and received an education of their own by making short trips to 6th Infantry Division's sector, where they observed portions of that organization as they attacked a heavily fortified town.<sup>5</sup>

As the fight in Manila intensified, Krueger attached the 112th to the 1st Cavalry Division and thus committed the RCT to its first combat mission on Luzon. Traveling south to within fifteen miles of the Philippine capital, the cavalrymen assumed responsibility for securing a sixty-mile stretch of Sixth Army's main supply route running south from the town of Cabanatuan to Manila. With its troops distributed throughout this expansive area of operations, the 112th conducted aggressive patrolling in conjunction with local guerrillas and slowly pushed its line of OPs toward the high ground east and northeast of Manila. These efforts brought the regiment into contact with Japanese forces manning the northern flank of the Shimbu Line, a series of defensive positions arrayed in depth and nestled in mountainous terrain for a length of approximately thirty-five miles. The RCT's later attachment to 6th Infantry Division and XIV Corps evolved out of Sixth Army's growing concern for the threat posed by the enemy east of the capital but resulted in no significant change in the troopers' activities until April. For the 112th, combat at its highest intensity during this period consisted of a succession of isolated troop-sized engagements in which the cavalrymen exchanged blows with the enemy in sector.<sup>6</sup>

When the RCT shifted south in early February to protect the 1st Cavalry Division's flank and rear, Cunningham oriented his forces chiefly on the mountains surrounding Ipo Dam, almost twenty miles northeast of Manila. At Ipo, an estimated six to ten thousand enemy soldiers formed the right flank of the Shimbu Line. Establishing a thin screen of platoon and troop-sized

outposts, McMains distributed his 2d Squadron along a lengthy stretch of Highway 5. Grant's 1st Squadron assumed a more concentrated posture much nearer to the Ipo area. Assigned an area of roughly twenty-five square-miles, Grant arranged his outfit in the shape of a diamond. Its eastern point lay eight miles away from the dam at an intersection where the 1st Cavalry Division's main supply route ran closest to the Shimbu Line defenses before turning southwest to the capital. It had not taken long for 1st Cavalry troopers to learn that the spot marked a popular target for the enemy's artillery, and, consequently, they had dubbed the location "Hot Corner." Here, Grant posted Captain Frank Fyke's C Troop.<sup>7</sup>

The 112th's successful stand at Hot Corner came about largely due to the application of previous lessons learned and demonstrated the extent to which the RCT had mastered the art of perimeter defense. Arriving by truck on the morning of 10 February, Fyke and his men relieved a unit whose commander described the recent enemy activity as unexceptional. It had consisted of intermittent salvos of artillery fire and limited probes against the position – nothing that led Fyke to expect a serious sustained assault. Still, no one could deny that the adversary was watching. Hot Corner was under observation from the mountains a mile or so to the northwest, and the small number of trees that dotted the area did little to provide cover or concealment. As he surveyed the open terrain descending gradually from the high ground of the intersection, Fyke determined that the Japanese could overrun a modest force like his, especially if it was unprepared for the onslaught. Such an attack, if it came, would most likely come from the north down the Metropolitan Road. However, Fyke, a veteran of the regiment's three earlier campaigns, knew the enemy enough to recognize that the main blow could fall anywhere. Based on his past experience, he also believed the Japanese would strike at night.<sup>8</sup>

Accordingly, the captain organized his troop in a perimeter and took steps to guarantee the effective use of available firepower in hours of darkness. His men occupied Hot Corner

accompanied by hard-hitting attachments consisting of two 37-mm antitank guns from regiment and a section of heavy machine guns from the squadron weapons troop. Anxious to avoid the possibility of squandering the effect of these primary direct-fire killing systems through a lack of coordination, Fyke carefully designated final protective lines to ensure that interlocking sectors of fire surrounded the whole perimeter. He filled in the gaps between these crew-served weapons with the troopers of his three line platoons. In each platoon sector, work began on the construction of a series of three-man foxholes to further solidify the defenses. Throughout the day on 10 February, the cavalymen entrenched, improved fields of fire, and test-fired their weapons. Besides the two 60-mm mortars organic to his troop, Fyke had at his disposal a section of 81-mm mortars detached from squadron. All four tubes registered on key approaches to the position, as well as on depressions in the terrain not covered by direct-fire systems. Grant also sent one of his artillery forward observer parties to Hot Corner. This team promptly established concentration areas five hundred yards north and south of the perimeter to assist with the rapid delivery of on-call fires from the 148th Field Artillery Battalion in direct support. Finally, Fyke dispatched local patrols to the surrounding area in an attempt to discover Japanese reconnaissance elements. The evening passed undisturbed. Only the billows of smoke, the faint glow of flames, and the near-constant rumblings of battle emanating from distant Manila served to enliven the dreary night watches.<sup>9</sup>

In their first engagement, the defenders of Hot Corner brushed aside the enemy in expert fashion. On the morning of 11 February, the Troop C commander was astounded to see an infantry company marching south down the Metropolitan Road seemingly unaware of his unit's presence. Fyke's mortars and .50-caliber machine guns opened fire at five hundred yards, shattering the Japanese column. The captain ordered a platoon to counterattack and observed as it moved forward on the far side of a small crest that ran along the road and thus out of the

enemy's sight. He shifted fire as the platoon turned to assault the disorganized remnants who had not yet fled, keeping the stream of bullets from Hot Corner forty yards in front of the charging cavalymen. The rout soon ended, twenty-two Japanese soldiers having lost their lives. Returning to the perimeter, the attacking platoon brought several captured machine guns. Those that still functioned were incorporated into Troop C's defenses, adding firepower to a formation now brimming with confidence. According to Fyke, they would need every bit of it.<sup>10</sup>

Over the next several days, the enemy operating from the northern reaches of the Shimbu Line subjected the troopers at Hot Corner to a frightful combination of artillery barrages and ground attacks. The assaults came during hours of darkness, and the Japanese often mounted them several times per night, threatening multiple sectors of the perimeter. The number of soldiers involved varied from platoon to company, with the exception of the blow that fell in the early morning hours of 15 February. That night, a force of three hundred massed against the C Troop perimeter. Enduring preliminary bombardments, Fyke and his men held together to repulse each attack with machine-gun, mortar, and artillery fire. The unit even proved modestly successful against Japanese infiltrators, cutting down one equipped with a satchel charge and another carrying a container of gasoline before either could cause any damage. On another night, two enemy soldiers probing the position were killed – though not before one of them got close enough to lob a grenade into a platoon CP.<sup>11</sup>

Nevertheless, such lapses in security were rare at Hot Corner, and, on balance, previous experience served Troop C well. The outfit withstood a series of nightly ground attacks through careful preparation of its perimeter defense and the skillful application of available firepower. Both of these contributing factors were manifestations of past lessons learned. On Arawe, the regiment had acquired a practical knowledge of the basics of defense. The cavalymen had learned how to employ their crew-served weapons effectively from fixed positions and how to



react to enemy assaults in hours of darkness. The lessons of New Britain had also provided the troopers with a grudging recognition of the necessity for digging in, together with an awareness of the value of the three-man foxhole when it came to maintaining vigilance at night.

The desperate fight on the Driniumor elevated the challenge of tactical defense to a higher level as the 112th fought outnumbered from hasty positions against a 360-degree threat. There, the regiment broke up repeated Japanese charges with accurate and responsive mortar and artillery fire. Forward observers called for these devastating barrages by means of a system of concentration areas, painstakingly established and coordinated ahead of time at regimental level.<sup>12</sup> For his unit's defense of Hot Corner, Fyke applied the same technique with equal success. "Our weapons registered on all key points outside the perimeter at the first possible moment after we took over the positions," he recalled. "Having done this, we knew the exact range to the [approaching] enemy column and were able to make direct hits on the target with our first rounds." This measure significantly reduced the need to adjust onto the target and thus averted the delay that would have ensued. In addition, Fyke noted that "numbered and plotted concentration areas for mortars and artillery facilitated our quick delivery of these fires in large quantities to any specified area surrounding the perimeter."<sup>13</sup> As a case in point, the two 105-mm howitzer batteries firing in support of C Troop essentially disrupted the 15 February attack before it even began. At dawn, patrols counted nearly fifty enemy dead in one of the pre-arranged concentration areas.<sup>14</sup>

The skills learned at Arawe and the Driniumor were reinforced on Leyte, where troops routinely established defensive perimeters at night and fended off Japanese probes through the employment of their direct-fire weapons.<sup>15</sup> In this respect too, the men of Troop C drew on past experience as they prepared their position at Hot Corner. They paid careful attention to the positioning of their automatic weapons and the designation of sectors of fire because – as Fyke

later maintained – they knew that, “in total darkness, machine guns are of little value to a defender unless they are employed with this type of coordination.”<sup>16</sup> The basis of a claim like this was not instinctive. Experience derived from over a year spent fighting the Japanese helped Fyke and others realize the necessity of such steps. Likewise, the cavalrymen’s use of captured machine guns illustrated their propensity to leverage the knowledge gained in previous campaigns. The majority of Fyke’s troopers had been trained in the operation of Japanese infantry weapons, making it relatively easy for the captain to reinforce the most vulnerable sections of his perimeter. Using the guns in this manner provided a psychological advantage as well. Fyke and his soldiers had come to believe that the enemy tended to grow demoralized when taken under fire by his own weapons.<sup>17</sup>

Thus as a subordinate organization of the 112th, Troop C had accumulated a body of technical and tactical knowledge that enabled the conduct of an effective perimeter defense. It had acquired this knowledge primarily through its own experience but also from the guidance of higher headquarters. For example, an October 1944 regimental training memorandum contained excerpts from a recent War Department publication entitled “Combat Lessons.” This document included advice on the “organization of a defensive area for a platoon,” addressing position selection, constructing fields of fire, and arranging for artillery support. At the time, Colonel Miller encouraged subordinates to read the material carefully. Implicit in his brief commentary was a warning not to accept this guidance at face value but rather to cull from it appropriate lessons that the 112th Cavalry could potentially apply in the future.<sup>18</sup>

As the regiment arrayed its units to secure the 1st Cavalry Division’s main supply route east of Manila, this same inclination to interpret new (and old) knowledge was evident, particularly in 1st Squadron’s allocation of mortars to support its expansive area of responsibility. Grant’s detachment of a section of his 81-mm mortars reflected a willingness to

deviate from standard practice if the situation called for it. Past experience had taught the 112th the utility of pooling its organic indirect fire assets in order to deliver more potent barrages onto waves of Japanese attackers. Thus, in New Guinea, squadrons had concentrated into one “battery” the 60-mm mortars usually attached to the line troops. This technique worked effectively when the regiment was arrayed in a relatively tight formation. With his unit spread out, Grant could hardly afford this degree of centralization. To better support his dispersed outposts east of Manila, he not only allowed the troops to keep their 60-mm mortars but also split up the 81-mm mortars that were normally retained under his direct control.<sup>19</sup> Changing conditions also led to a subtle shift in the 112th’s use of its anti-tank guns. Thick vegetation, rugged ravines and mountains, and impassable roads and trails had ruled out their employment at the front on Leyte and New Guinea. Consequently, the 37-mm guns remained in base areas.<sup>20</sup> Luzon’s much better transportation network and more open terrain meant that commanders could take advantage of their anti-tank weapons by attaching them to the line troops, and Grant did so at Hot Corner.

Taking knowledge acquired from internal and external sources and interpreting it as needed, the 112th then distributed that knowledge through a number of means. One was a deliberate process conducted at the conclusion of each operation in which troop commanders solicited their men – lieutenants and privates alike – for lessons learned. Leaders collated these, and ultimately the regimental staff compiled them into a report for Sixth Army. Though undertaken to fulfill a requirement, the practice provided a way for the 112th to reflect on its own experience and share that information within the organization. Stability among a core of unit leaders probably helped.<sup>21</sup> It is not hard to see how Fyke, having gone through two iterations of this process as a troop commander, could have benefited from the lessons learned by others in prior campaigns. As the next step in this formal process, the regiment generated a

training plan based in part on the knowledge gained in recent combat.<sup>22</sup> When time cut training opportunities short (as was usually the case), less formal methods of distribution brought new soldiers up to speed. Fyke himself counted on veterans to teach replacements the skills they would need to perform well in battle. It must have been gratifying to hear one of his corporals emphasize after the Leyte operation that this kind of training was indeed occurring in C Troop.<sup>23</sup>

Viewing Troop C's road to success at Hot Corner through a lens of organizational learning theory, it seems clear that the 112th acquired, interpreted, and distributed knowledge effectively – at least with respect to the task of perimeter defense. The nature of the unit's operational environment afforded numerous opportunities for incremental learning in this area in every campaign from Woodlark to Leyte. Likewise, the communication mechanisms employed by the group allowed for the transfer of explicit and tacit knowledge. A deliberate collection of lessons learned at the conclusion of each operation captured for later use such pertinent information as Japanese tactics and the capabilities of weapon systems. More subtle lessons, like the psychological effect of firing at the enemy with his own machine guns, were disseminated among both veterans and new arrivals via informal methods. Stability in the officer ranks over months of campaigning enhanced the regiment's ability to distill and apply the appropriate lessons.<sup>24</sup>

When it came to conducting perimeter defense on Luzon, the 112th relied on the knowledge it had learned over the course of three previous campaigns. In preparing fighting positions, establishing concentration areas for mortars and artillery, and incorporating captured Japanese weapons into the overall defense, Fyke and his men had drawn upon this knowledge. Undoubtedly, personal experience played a crucial role, but it went beyond that. The regiment interpreted and distributed the knowledge it had acquired and had done so in a way that enabled Troop C to fend off successive ground assaults once the time arrived for that unit to be tested at

Hot Corner. There were, of course, limits to both knowledge and experience. Nevertheless, when the situation abruptly took a turn the 112th had not expected, the regiment proved flexible enough to adapt in order to meet new challenges – or at least to mitigate their negative effects. C Troop's defense of Hot Corner again provides an excellent example.

Throughout the period of his unit's stand at the key intersection, Fyke worried most about the Japanese artillery and the toll it was taking on his men. From 11 to 15 February, enemy guns dug-in amid the mountains around Ipo Dam engaged in far more than harassing fire. Multiple bombardments fell on Hot Corner with an accuracy and intensity unprecedented in the 112th's experience. Troop C actually sustained few casualties due to the protection its well-prepared fighting positions offered, but shellfire damaged several weapons and vehicles and nearly brought about a logistical catastrophe when the Japanese targeted a convoy delivering ammunition to the perimeter. Though Fyke was confident that his unit could hold its position indefinitely, he grew concerned with "the seemingly endless rain of artillery" and the nervousness it generated in a number of cavalymen. The captain's escalating anxiety and frustration stemmed from the fact that a solution to the problem laid outside of C Troop's reach.<sup>25</sup> Indeed, the enemy guns appeared to be largely beyond even the regiment's ability to affect. To alleviate pressure on the key outpost, the 112th applied familiar technology and equipment in an untraditional way.

The morning after the first heavy Japanese bombardment, Fyke radioed Grant and suggested he might need help. In response, the 1st Squadron commander alerted Troop A to the possibility of moving to reinforce Hot Corner and made arrangements to dispatch another heavy machine gun and anti-tank section to that location. Although these measures – along with Grant's personal visit – may have comforted Fyke, they did little to ease the detrimental effects

of enemy indirect fire. Rounds continued to fall on the position, sporadic shelling during the days and extended barrages at night lasting anywhere from thirty minutes to two hours.<sup>26</sup>

Only Piper Cubs, liaison planes assigned to the 148th Field Artillery Battalion, offered the RCT a reliable means of finding the guns and then knocking them out with counter-battery fire. The 112th had a pair of these two-seater planes, but, in mid-February, one of them was grounded for mechanical repairs.<sup>27</sup> The demand on the functional aircraft was extraordinarily high given the RCT's expansive sector and the Piper Cub's tremendous versatility. Originally intended as aerial platforms for observing artillery fire, the 148th's planes had also been used in previous campaigns to airdrop supplies, relay radio communications, fly commanders on reconnaissance missions, and even to redirect ground units that had lost their way in complex terrain.<sup>28</sup> Thus, it was nothing unusual for Grant to enlist the help of the Cub as a step on the way to silencing the guns pounding Hot Corner.

Yet this task proved more difficult than the 112th's leaders imagined. As it turned out, the Japanese were adaptive as well and, quite aware of the danger Piper Cubs posed to their artillery, brought the shelling to a halt whenever the aircraft appeared. Later, Fyke learned that the opponent had taken to towing his howitzers into nearby caves to avoid detection from the air.<sup>29</sup> When it was not committed elsewhere, the Cub searched for C Troop's tormentors, but it searched in vain. On 14 February, Fyke concluded, "The only way we could make the enemy guns cease firing was to keep a plane over his area constantly."<sup>30</sup> Obviously, this was impossible, and Fyke knew it. Nevertheless, the captain had arrived at a technique that sought to harness as best he could the resources available. Though far from optimal, it seemed workable to a point. That night, after the enemy artillery began its bombardment of Hot Corner, Fyke requested the support of the Piper Cub. It mattered little that the RCT seldom used the plane in periods of limited visibility because the C Troop commander had given up any hope of actually

finding the Japanese guns. By this time, he only wanted them to stop firing. Indeed, they did once the aircraft reached the area. The pilot remained on station for two to three hours, and, during this respite, Fyke's rattled GIs breathed a bit easier and braced themselves for the Cub's inevitable departure. This occurred around 0100. The shelling commenced again – this time in preparation for a Japanese infantry assault on the perimeter, which Troop C handily repulsed.<sup>31</sup>

Although it led only to a temporary fix, the 112th's employment of the Piper Cub at Hot Corner offers some insight into the nature of organizational learning and adaptation. By deliberately using an aerial observer as a sort of switch to “turn off” the enemy's artillery, Fyke exercised a familiar asset in an innovative manner. Desperation contributed in no small way to this innovation, but so did the RCT's previous experience. In the operations preceding Luzon, the 112th often assigned missions to its Piper Cub crews that lay outside normal doctrinal bounds. The extent and frequency of these irregular missions seem to suggest that the pilots seldom minded. Indeed, in the case of developing techniques for aerial resupply in the mountains of Leyte, the pilots themselves were among the most zealous innovators.<sup>32</sup>

What appears more important, however, is Fyke's logic as he sought a solution to the redoubtable problem of silencing the Japanese guns targeting his position. As he saw it, that solution required an atypical approach, and nothing in his mind kept him from asking that such an approach be taken. Moreover, his higher headquarters was willing to allow a valuable asset (in this case, its only functional liaison plane) to be employed in the unconventional manner that Fyke requested. In a sense, using the aircraft in a new way was nothing new at all. Innovation had become routine, and this in turn fostered further adaptation. Operating in such a climate, leaders in the unit seemed better postured to interpret previously acquired knowledge and apply it more readily to the different situations that confronted them.

A principal factor in the learning process as it unfolded at Hot Corner was the cavalrymen's keen awareness of the Piper Cub and how it could be employed. In his discussion on organizational learning, Brian A. Jackson states, "A group's ability to interpret new knowledge and put it to use is largely determined by the relationship between the new knowledge and what the group and its members already know."<sup>33</sup> This concept of "absorptive capacity" applies particularly well to technology. Machines or weapon systems comparable to those an organization already uses are easier to incorporate into that organization's activities. The tacit or intuitive knowledge associated with both the new and old technologies is similar, so it takes less effort for members to learn how to operate them.<sup>34</sup> The 112th's familiarity with the versatile liaison plane made leaders better equipped to employ it in non-standard ways and more accepting of such ideas when GIs proposed them.

Moreover, a sufficient amount of absorptive capacity allowed soldiers to ascribe this quality of versatility to related technology and transfer it when the opportunity presented itself towards the end of the campaign. In June, Sixth Army began using helicopters to deliver supplies to units operating in mountainous areas inaccessible by truck. Mopping up remnants of the Shimbu Group miles east of Ipo Dam, D. M. McMains sought to relieve his men from the tedious task of hand-carrying their wounded comrades over rough terrain to a base camp medical facility. He approached one of the pilots and suggested that basket-like frames welded on each side of the aircraft would increase the number of casualties it could evacuate. The next time pilots flew to McMains' position, their helicopters sported jury-rigged baskets, which boosted the maximum patient load from one to three. The same organizational capacity for devising new uses for the multi-functional Piper Cub enabled the regiment to develop innovative techniques for other supporting aircraft.<sup>35</sup>



Troop C's stand at Hot Corner was not the only instance in which the outfit utilized the Piper Cub as a means to avoid the effects of enemy artillery. It appears that the 112th distributed this new knowledge and thus enabled other subordinate units to implement the associated technique successfully. As the regiment continued to carry out its screening mission on the corps' left flank through March and into April, Grant's 1st Squadron maintained a loose configuration of outposts southwest of Ipo Dam. On 11 April, its ration train caught the attention of a Japanese OP and came under indirect fire twice during a trip to the frontline units, taking about a dozen rounds each time. To avoid the next day's expected shelling, the 112th arranged for a liaison plane to fly above the area while the ration train made its way back to base. This preventative measure ostensibly worked since the enemy's artillery did not engage what had so recently been deemed a worthwhile target. A Piper Cub provided overhead cover the following morning, and again the guns were silent as the convoy completed its mission safely.<sup>36</sup> In protecting the 1st Squadron's trains this way, the unit employed a technique first developed and tested by the C Troop commander in February. Yet by mid-April, a wounded Fyke was receiving medical treatment in the rear preparatory to evacuation stateside.<sup>37</sup> This particular knowledge, gained at Hot Corner, had been distributed broadly enough to allow the organization to apply it without the innovator's input.

To be sure, the 112th did not employ the Cub in this role every time its soldiers took incoming. Such a response would have been impractical given the high demand placed on the liaison aircraft as they performed multiple functions throughout the RCT's expansive sector. In any case, the instances in which the unit came under heavy, prolonged artillery fire were few. After C Troop's trial at Hot Corner in February, elements of the regiment suffered through intense bombardments only twice more. The outfit that relieved Fyke at the key intersection and portions of 1st Squadron conducting a reconnaissance-in-force just east of the Metropolitan Road

both endured hour-long barrages, each with a cost exceeding twenty-five casualties.<sup>38</sup> The former sheds some light on the barriers to the interpretation and distribution of knowledge and highlights the ambivalent nature of experience as well.

When Captain Leonard Johnson's B Troop took over from Fyke on the afternoon of 15 February, information exchange occurred at various echelons. GIs pulling out of the position advised their replacements to dig in immediately, and, aware that they were under observation from the mountains to the northwest, the newcomers wasted no time arguing. At another level, Fyke briefed Johnson on the situation before he departed with his unit, but the seriousness of the threat posed by the enemy gunners must have been misunderstood or poorly conveyed. The B Troop commander found the defensive layout he had inherited unsatisfactory. Though no less experienced than Fyke, he nonetheless saw the ground differently and chose to place his soldiers in a much tighter perimeter, consolidating around a stone farmhouse near the intersection. This more compressed formation likely accounted for the casualties his outfit sustained the next day. On the afternoon of the 16th, the Japanese subjected the cavalrymen at Hot Corner to a lengthy bombardment that killed two and wounded forty, including a dozen guerrillas. Aside from sporadic artillery fire and probes by small groups of infiltrators, Troop B faced nothing else in the way of enemy activity during the remainder of its week securing the crucial outpost. Even so, the intensity of the shelling on their first full day in position made many soldiers thankful to leave when the time came.<sup>39</sup>

Captain Johnson's previous experience helps explain why he arranged his unit as he did. The lessons of prior campaigns taught the Troop B commander that he had more to fear from a Japanese ground assault than he did from their howitzers. Consequently, he positioned his men in a relatively compact perimeter, no doubt considering this tactical arrangement to be a more secure option in the event of a 360-degree night attack or infiltration. On New Guinea or Leyte,

it probably would have been. On a piece of terrain known by the regiment to be a favorite artillery target for well-placed enemy forward observers and capable gun crews, Johnson's positioning proved unwise. Had he remained at Hot Corner to critique his peer's defensive preparations, Fyke might have said as much. Yet Fyke was gone, and whatever he had mentioned to the Troop B commander about the danger of Japanese indirect fire was not compelling enough to change Johnson's conception of what constituted the gravest threat to the outpost.

In a slightly different matter, the misleading effect of past experience was the same. Fyke's description of how he had employed the Piper Cub also seems to have made little impact on his successor. The outgoing commander had a good deal to tell about the role the aircraft played in mitigating the effect of the enemy's artillery. Just hours before Fyke handed Hot Corner over to B Troop, the RCT had given the Japanese reason to trust their fears regarding the plane. A Cub had spotted the flash of a discharging howitzer, and this discovery led to a counterfire mission that resulted in the gun's destruction – thus accomplishing what the C Troop commander had hoped for all along.<sup>40</sup> To Johnson though, the significance was not so clear. Fyke had weathered the storm of many barrages to arrive at his answer to the new but apparently now persistent menace of Japanese artillery. Unlike his colleague, the commander of B Troop lacked a pattern of personal experience to lead him to such a conclusion. He had to rely on the lessons Fyke had learned. At another level, the situation was similar for his men, yet they keenly dug in at the suggestion of their predecessors. The character of the threat had changed – perhaps to their surprise – but the change required them to perform a task with which they were quite familiar. The GIs thus had the absorptive capacity to adapt quickly.<sup>41</sup> Their captain did not in this instance. Johnson had to make a greater intellectual leap before he could consider adopting a technique that the organization had never attempted until the battle at Hot Corner. The

informal method of knowledge distribution and the time allowed for his own interpretation of that knowledge were not enough to persuade him to employ the liaison plane in an unconventional manner. Nor were they sufficient to supplant the impressions Johnson had acquired through personal experience defending against the Japanese.

The mid-February fight at Hot Corner not only provides a case study for a successful perimeter defense but also fairly represents the 112th's performance of that task throughout the campaign.<sup>42</sup> Most importantly though, it illustrates the ambivalent role experience plays in the process of organizational learning. Depending on the conditions, experience can act as a barrier to learning the right lessons or serve as a springboard for further adaptation. Certain factors determine which of the two. The environment shapes an organization's opportunities to learn, providing either a sort of uniformity in operations suitable to continuous improvement or a series of steadily mounting challenges that lead to new discoveries. Absorptive capacity shows how units can bridge the gap from old to new tactics and techniques due to their familiarity with a related way of doing business. Lastly, the nature of group communication mechanisms affects how well different elements of the organization learn. The method used to distribute new knowledge must be appropriate to the kind of knowledge – explicit or tacit – being transferred.<sup>43</sup>

Yet the engagements at Hot Corner constituted just one part of the unit's overall effort east of Manila. Guarding the line of communications and screening the left flank of the 1st Cavalry Division (and, later, the XI Corps) required the regiment to adapt in no small measure. The mission involved much more than holding troop and platoon positions in the shadow of the Shambu Line. It also called for the 112th to develop a rather sophisticated defensive system based upon those outposts and supported by patrol operations, responsive artillery fire, and the versatile Piper Cub. For the RCT, doing so entailed capitalizing on something it did well and extending its capabilities to meet the demands of a new situation.

Days after the culmination of the Hot Corner struggle, patrols from 1st Squadron detected what appeared to be the general movement of a number of small enemy formations to the northeast as they evacuated Manila and drifted toward Ipo Dam. Anxious to reduce this flow of forces, Cunningham ordered Grant to establish a chain of OPs across the likely approaches through his sector to the Shimbu Line. This latest task required the squadron commander to thin out his already dispersed subordinate units even further by creating several more positions and then manning each with fewer soldiers. Combat at Hot Corner had demonstrated the need for continued vigilance. Outfits could not be reshuffled haphazardly lest they be exposed to the threat of a concentrated Japanese attack. With Troop A focused on reconnaissance to the north along the Angat River, Grant directed B and C to set up a total of twelve squad-sized OPs to help cut off the escape routes out of Manila. At the same time, each troop retained one platoon around its CP to form the core of a strong defense should an OP be compelled to withdraw from its position under enemy pressure.<sup>44</sup> From this network of outposts, patrols fanned out into the surrounding area to provide local security and maintain contact with nearby OPs. Liaison aircraft under RCT control assisted with reconnaissance while the 148th Field Artillery offered added reach and firepower.

Once put in place, the defensive system east of Manila worked much like Grant had intended. At dawn on 1 March, the Japanese attacked one of Troop B's OPs with machine-gun and mortar fire. The cavalymen fell back to the relative safety of the pre-arranged rally point near the troop CP, where leaders organized a combat patrol to retake the lost position. It did so on the same day. Both sides followed almost the same exact script the next day when twenty-five enemy soldiers drove off an OP in the Troop C sector. Soon thereafter, Fyke's men killed eleven in a successful counterattack supported by indirect fire.

While 1st Squadron's procedures were enough to maintain a fixed line of OPs at little cost in GI lives, its efforts with respect to stopping Japanese movement through the area were spotty at best. On 26 February, a Troop B outpost observed a few of their opponents coming toward them from a distance. A patrol investigated and intercepted a platoon-sized group making its way northeast in a creek bed. The discovery precipitated a rout in which American small arms and mortar fire accounted for eighteen Japanese dead. A week later, Weapons Troop established two OPs based on civilian reports of enemy activity near a specific barrio, and these netted a pair of stragglers that night. Unfortunately, an equal number of missed opportunities tarnished such small successes. One OP botched an ambush and allowed fifteen Japanese probing the darkness with flashlights to escape unscathed. Another let a couple of enemy soldiers pass by unmolested in the mistaken hope that a larger unit would follow. Unmentioned, of course, were the several groups that traversed the 1st Squadron sector completely unnoticed by the cavalrymen.<sup>45</sup>

The significance of the 112th's OP system northeast of Manila was that it served as a means of reconciling – if only partially – the two competing features in the tactical dilemma confronting the organization at the time. First Squadron had to disperse in order to increase the odds that its troopers could locate the elusive groups of Japanese trickling through the sector. Yet the unit also had to retain the capability to defend against a concentrated attack emanating from the Shimbu Line. Consequently, Grant set up a network of OPs to cover likely routes of travel while establishing procedures to protect these scattered squad-sized outposts from being overrun. The need to strike a balance prompted adaptation as the outfit assumed some risk to accomplish the mission but developed a new method to mitigate the danger it presented. The regiment's consistently effective performance in perimeter defense no doubt made that risk a more acceptable one to take. Adaptation followed a familiar pattern: interpreting previously

acquired knowledge in order to apply it to the challenge at hand. In this case, the 112th relied on skills it was comfortable executing while it built upon its ability to launch a counterattack quickly. Not surprisingly, when the Japanese tested the defensive arrangement with small-scale assaults on individual OPs, the system designed to protect those positions worked. The regiment was less successful in the almost alien task of finding an enemy that did not want to be found. Hoping to avoid contact as they stole through the area, such opponents proved hard to track down – even with the intelligence advantage afforded by a sympathetic populace.

At any rate, the urgency of interdicting eastward Japanese movement seems to have subsided in early March as pressure mounted to determine the strength and disposition of the enemy's Ipo Dam defenses. Since mid-February, elements of McMains' 2d Squadron had been edging toward the Shimbu Line north of the Angat River. Grant too had committed a portion of his forces to reconnaissance missions south of that waterway. The 112th's fight on Luzon had become a war of OPs and patrols, and the outpost line was shifting east.<sup>46</sup>

As the campaign progressed, the RCT sustained its impressive skills in defensive operations. For the remainder of their time on Luzon, the cavalymen never faced an assault that rivaled the one at Hot Corner in its sustained intensity. However, those that came closest dissipated under the hammer of accurate artillery and mortar fire – often before they directly threatened the American position. When intelligence reports or other indicators suggested that an attack might be imminent, the 112th responded aggressively by combing the surrounding area with patrols, dispatching its Piper Cubs on aerial reconnaissance missions, and placing artillery fire on suspected enemy avenues of approach.<sup>47</sup> These actions, deftly coordinated and executed, reflected a certain confidence in the organization's tactics and techniques and an effective use of its available resources. Building on its past experience, the 112th had interpreted previously

acquired knowledge and developed new or slightly altered procedures to deal with the problems of defensive operations on Luzon.

The foundation for success remained a widespread expertise in mounting a perimeter defense. Throughout the campaign, OPs, main positions, and bivouac sites consistently repulsed nighttime probes with little trouble and did so in part because GIs stayed proficient in the skills that supported this task. Troopers on OP duty maintained their alertness to a sufficient degree, set booby traps to provide early warning, and exercised fire discipline to avoid needlessly giving away their location.<sup>48</sup> The regiment had acquired these basic pieces of knowledge at Arawe, and, over the course of several operations and in spite of personnel turnover, it had not forgotten them. On the contrary, veterans distributed the lessons of their experience to new arrivals and thus ensured the continued application of those lessons. Consequently, costly knowledge – like recognizing the danger of leaving one’s foxhole and moving around the position at night – did not have to be re-acquired.

Inexperienced or not, all cavalymen tended to take perimeter defense seriously even as the fighting on Luzon sputtered to its conclusion. The persistent menace of Japanese infiltrators went far toward offsetting the temptation for sloppiness in this area. By the end of the campaign, stealthy enemy forays against American positions typically entailed a raid on the unit kitchen facilities, but this seemed only to heighten the danger in the minds of troopers on guard. While pulling this duty, Private Robert Bray of Weapons Troop stood nervously in his foxhole, “peering into the dark and keeping both ears open for the sounds of infiltrators.”<sup>49</sup> He marveled at the silence of the night and the absence of even the faintest light inside the perimeter, where several hundred men slept. Bray arguably exceeded the discipline of his comrades as he endured the nettlesome bites of mosquitoes for fear that the noise made by slapping them would reveal his position. Having reported to the 112th in May for his first assignment overseas, Private Bray



did not acquire this specific knowledge through his own exposure to infiltrators.<sup>50</sup> There was little time for the young trooper to learn such tricks-of-the-trade independently. Others taught him.

While Grant managed the defense of Hot Corner and the effort to stop the intermittent flow of Japanese from Manila, the RCT continued to keep an eye on the Shimbu Line and began to test, with increasing frequency and intensity, the formidable enemy defenses in front of Ipo Dam. As it maintained a protective screen, the unit benefited from an environment that facilitated continuous improvement, particularly in the area of patrolling. The cavalymen had conducted patrols since deploying overseas, and, while they had acquired some degree of expertise in the task, there was still much to learn. Absorptive capacity stemming from its past experience, coupled with the provision of adequate time, allowed the 112th to make the leap to night patrolling, a new method that enabled the troopers to probe the approaches to Ipo Dam in more depth. Gradual improvement in patrolling stood in contrast to a reconnaissance-in-force in April, when the outfit became immersed in a situation it was unprepared to handle. The hasty withdrawal that followed only reinforced the utility of incremental learning.

To visualize the 112th's area of operations, it is helpful to picture a lazy square leaning east with the dam at its upper right-hand corner. Opposite this location was the 1st Squadron headquarters at Santa Maria, a town some fifteen miles north of Manila. Hot Corner was situated eight miles east along the square's base, and about an equal distance up its left edge laid Norzagaray. From this village, the path of the Angat River wound its way generally east into the mountainous Ipo area and eventually to the dam itself. Route 52, dubbed the Metropolitan Road, framed the right side of the square. From Hot Corner, the graveled road went roughly north to the barrio of Bigti and at that point turned sharply east, cutting a passage through high, jagged ridges and up to the dam. Another road running from Bigti northwest to Norzagaray bisected the

1st Squadron sector across terrain that included a mixture of rice paddies, wooded hills, and jumbled rock outcroppings. The landscape became increasingly irregular and elevated as one neared Ipo Dam.<sup>51</sup> Second Squadron operated north of the Angat River. Initially, many of its troopers had their hands full guarding bridges and conducting local patrols along the main supply route. By mid-February however, McMains managed to free some units from these commitments, enabling him to send patrols east up the Angat River. Grant did the same along its southern banks while other elements of his squadron began to make their way cautiously toward Bigti and beyond.

The patrols dispatched at this stage of the campaign ran into advanced positions of the Ipo Dam defenses. These discoveries triggered platoon and troop-sized attacks that pushed the opponent back and allowed the 112th to gradually shift its outpost line east. On 17 February, a hard-fought action a mile or so west of Norzagaray demonstrated the capabilities of seasoned cavalrymen in the assault. Days before, patrols along the Angat River had made several contacts with groups of thirty to forty Japanese soldiers and had come out on the winning end of these engagements with the help of the 148th's B Battery. Strengthened by a platoon of guerrillas and nearly another from C Troop, Captain Lamar Boland's Troop A went forward on the morning of the 17th after a powerful artillery barrage. Though bumping into resistance, Boland sustained the attack all day and coordinated effective indirect fire support for his men through his artillery observer and the Piper Cub overhead. Two more platoons from E Troop joined the fight later in the day, enabling Boland to clear the area his men had seized. By evening, he had established his next line of OPs. The captain believed afterwards that his reinforced unit had gone up against three hundred soldiers, and the 120 dead Japanese that remained around the position suggested as much. U.S. and guerrilla losses amounted to only five wounded.<sup>52</sup> Such one-sided victories were not uncommon as the 112th drew closer to the Shimbu Line.<sup>53</sup>

Success during this early stage of operations on Luzon confirmed what the regiment had previously learned about how well the enemy performed defensively under certain circumstances. At Arawe, green cavalymen acquired a grudging respect for the skill and tenacity of the Japanese soldiers fighting them from a network of prepared positions concealed in the jungle's thick foliage. They were less impressed with the force they faced along the Driniumor River, where the opponent lacked this elaborate defense. Carrying out a number of successful counterattacks in the aftermath of failed assaults on their perimeter, troopers regarded the enemy as "'easy' when caught out of his fox hole."<sup>54</sup> With a sort of smugness, some took heart at what seemed to be the start of a downward spiral of Japanese morale.<sup>55</sup> As its members gained more combat experience, the 112th viewed the enemy with finer nuance. On Leyte, the unit encountered its adversary in a number of different tactical situations, thus prompting mixed reviews on Japanese defensive capability. In the open, the opponent was practically a pushover and simply abandoned valleys and streambeds after taking artillery fire. When firmly entrenched though, the Japanese remained a worthy opponent, ensconced in camouflaged fortifications atop wooded ridgelines in defiance of the RCT and nearly all it could bring to bear.<sup>56</sup>

Leaders of the 112th effectively applied this knowledge in their initial moves toward the Shimbu Line. Assaults like the one orchestrated by Captain Boland west of Norzagaray took place across terrain far less daunting than the rugged high ground dominating the approaches to the Ipo Dam. They also fell upon the enemy's forward defenses, positions much weaker by comparison to those in the mountains a little further east. Boland seemed to sense these favorable conditions before and during the battle. Emboldened by the strong performance of his patrols, he launched an attack to extend the outpost line. The progress of the advance reassured him, as did the visible effects of his artillery support. Boland requested reinforcements but did

so in a state of confidence – not panic – knowing that their commitment would finish off the enemy and enable Troop A to secure its gains.

Units facing different scenarios around the same period showed less enthusiasm but drew upon the same refined understanding of the opponent's capabilities. Following a surprise attack on an enemy formation, elements of 2d Squadron pursued large numbers of fleeing Japanese through some vegetation and found that they had retreated into a series of caves. It took little time to determine that the attackers could not approach the well-protected position without exposing themselves to heavy machine-gun fire, and the discovery was enough to suspend further offensive action against this particular group.<sup>57</sup> Future operations against cave defenses were characterized by a similar reluctance to launch an assault outright. With the initial detection of such sites, the 112th saw no reason to eliminate them immediately. Instead, the unit marshaled additional support in the form of airpower or guerrilla detachments. Cavalrymen sometimes found themselves clearing caves along the outpost line, but the performance of this duty came only after aerial or artillery bombardments had prompted the occupants of those positions to vacate them.<sup>58</sup>

No doubt, the 112th had acquired an appreciation of Japanese strengths and weaknesses, to include an awareness of the conditions that tended to accentuate or offset those abilities. Troopers encountering the enemy in the open seized the initiative and pressed the attack. Those who located a possible strongpoint exercised caution. Leaders recognized these conditions as cues to guide their actions, signifying that the organization had learned from the experience of its three campaigns and had preserved this knowledge for follow-on application.

An evolving conception of Japanese fighting qualities went hand in hand with a reconsideration of the RCT's own tactics and techniques. Although the 112th's patrolling operations had improved over time, they still suffered from notable shortcomings. Combat on

Arawe had revealed the great value of the small, four-man reconnaissance patrol for pinpointing concealed enemy bunkers. Routine patrolling also familiarized troopers with the importance of stealth in movement and how to employ indirect fire support in the jungle. The more fluid environment on the Driniumor placed a higher premium on the intelligence that only patrols could provide and thus pushed GIs to the breaking point. Senior commanders dispatched patrols with greater frequency and into ostensibly more dangerous situations. Plenty of resentment accompanied this change, and cavalymen complained about the RCT's perceived inability to coordinate and support these activities. For his part, Cunningham suspected that many patrol leaders simply hid out in the jungle for a few hours rather than carry out their missions. The lessons learned on Leyte faintly echoed these criticisms but generally assumed a less scathing tone toward staffs within the RCT, perhaps because most realized after this campaign that effective patrols ultimately saved time, energy, and lives.<sup>59</sup>

Commanders on Luzon sought to harness this recognition of the value of patrolling as they took steps to correct the problems GIs and their leaders had observed in prior campaigns. The regiment's mission helped in this regard. The essence of screening was patrolling, and the assignment demanded that the unit establish a routine for conducting reconnaissance of the enemy sector while preventing Japanese units from doing the same. Besides detachments for local security, troops sent out at least one other patrol per day. Leaders tailored these elements according to their purpose. Reconnaissance patrols consisted of four men under the direction of an officer or NCO and sometimes included a Filipino guide. Designed especially to avoid detection, their task entailed reporting on enemy activity to the rear of the OP line. Combat patrols varied in size but usually comprised a platoon of dismounted cavalry plus several guerrillas and perhaps an artillery forward observer. The 112th often dispatched these units in response to the findings of the four-man detachments.<sup>60</sup> Organizing multiple patrols and

coordinating their movement was nothing new for the regiment, but the intensity of the practice escalated on Luzon.

Given the chance to focus on patrolling, the 112th improved its ability to keep its soldiers informed and to manage the activities of its wide-ranging detachments once they departed the bivouac area. First Sergeant Melvin Waite's CP near the Angat River was all about the business of running daily patrols. Situated in a Filipino house, the E Troop CP had on one wall a map depicting the tactical situation around Ipo Dam. Reports came in by radio almost constantly throughout the day as numerous patrols updated their locations by means of a system the troop commander developed. In the evening, the unit received its missions for the following twenty-four-hour period – sometimes from a squadron staff officer who visited the CP personally. Patrol leaders spent part of the night at the CP pouring over maps by flashlight and planning their operations for the next day. As an observer and participant in the process, Waite was impressed, boasting in his diary about “an ideal set-up . . . almost like a Hollywood scene.”<sup>61</sup> Across the regiment, the extent of preparation remained high even as the months passed. In May, Sergeant Allen Benton described how he and his soldiers “got all the information we needed” at a briefing by the squadron intelligence officer before heading out on their mission.<sup>62</sup> After previous campaigns, feedback gathered during a review of lessons learned highlighted grievances from junior officers and enlisted men regarding the 112th's manner of coordinating its patrols. On Luzon, the regiment responded to this acquired knowledge by increasing staff involvement and emphasizing the importance of planning at squadron and troop level.

At the same time, the organization sought to improve the quality of intelligence that its patrols collected through a formalized system of reporting. After returning from a mission, leaders submitted a typewritten account of their unit's actions and often included a sketch with the narrative. Copies of these documents made their way from the troop CP up the channels to

regimental headquarters, where Miller and his key staff officers reviewed them. Each began with a description of the patrol's composition in terms of men and equipment and then identified its mission. The amount of detail provided in the memoranda varied. Most ran well over a page in length and mainly described the terrain, enemy sightings, and encounters with natives.<sup>63</sup> Some leaders put forward a brief analysis of their observations, but what the reports really offered upper echelons of the RCT was an assurance that the patrols themselves actually occurred. A less pronounced kind of adaptation, the institution of this system probably served to alleviate the suspicions that Cunningham had harbored since the Driniumor. Knowing their words would be read by senior commanders and had the potential to set in motion a follow-on combat mission, patrol leaders tended to refrain from fabrications – or so the thinking went. The general may have been the only one to hold such thoughts at this stage. In any case, the system provided Miller with a document that could easily turn a patrol leader who had been merely lazy into a liar as well if there were cause to believe so.

Evidence of improved patrolling operations appeared not only in the 112th's overall system but also in the performance of its junior leaders. Troop B platoon sergeant Claude Rigsby recalled a growing confidence in his abilities on patrol in Luzon. Previous experience bore fruit as Rigsby demonstrated technical skill and found that he could trust his instincts. More telling was the impact such seasoned GIs seemed to have had on replacements reporting to the regiment. Fresh from the States, Sergeant Benton joined B Troop early in the campaign but, by April, considered himself a veteran when it came to operating behind enemy lines. He acquired a self-assured expertise in a short time, yet knowledge related to selecting suitable bivouac sites or recognizing the sign of a Japanese ambush before it was sprung did not come naturally.<sup>64</sup> He had to be taught, and he was – despite no formal program to train new arrivals.

Suffice it to say, a lack of training did not equate to a lack of learning. The unit's primary assignment on Luzon afforded numerous opportunities to conduct patrolling. In a sense, the operational environment provided a form of stability that allowed the cavalymen to learn the nuances of this skill incrementally. Thus, as the organization improved its ability to distribute explicit knowledge through patrol reports and pre-mission briefings, the circumstances of the campaign facilitated the dissemination of tacit knowledge, too. Longtime veterans like Rigsby shared their experiences with troopers like Benton.<sup>65</sup> The latter had time to internalize this information – perhaps even saw it modeled for them – and then had several chances to practice what they had been taught informally. Together, the distribution of explicit and tacit knowledge enabled to the regiment to learn and improve.

Establishing a better system of planning and accountability for patrolling operations may have exhibited the 112th's ability to interpret previously acquired knowledge, but it did not necessarily guarantee adequate reconnaissance. In the running battle between patrols and OPs northeast of Manila, the regiment not only screened a corps flank but also sought to determine the strength and disposition of the enemy defenses. To fulfill this responsibility, the cavalymen had to infiltrate the Japanese outpost line along the Bigti-Norzagaray road and work their way through unfriendly territory in search of the fortifications that comprised the more robust main line of resistance concentrated in the mountains north, south, and west of Ipo Dam. For nearly all of February, the regiment's patrols failed in their attempts to pass undetected through the opponent's forward positions. This lack of progress attracted Cunningham's attention, and the general on one occasion sent a staff officer from RCT headquarters to the front with the purpose of accompanying a patrol. At the end of the month, a few detachments managed to cross the road, but the information they provided was not enough to satisfy Miller, who complained of "having difficulty finding much about the enemy main strength."<sup>66</sup>



To help solve the immediate issue of penetrating the outpost line and gathering intelligence throughout the depth of the Ipo Dam defenses, the 112th built upon its prior experiences and devised new techniques based on the employment of familiar tools. The Piper Cub pilots continued to perform yeomen's work for the RCT by calling for fire on targets well beyond the observation of ground patrols. As usual, the planes proved their versatility, serving as aerial platforms for relaying the communications of distant patrols and flying commanders and patrol leaders on reconnaissance missions. Coordinating indirect fire support remained a strength of the RCT. Small units probing the Ipo Dam defenses often relied upon the destructive power of the 148th Field Artillery, with enemy groups that chose to engage American patrols paying a price at the hands of skillful forward observers.<sup>67</sup> Taking a procedure tried as an emergency measure on Leyte, artillery units incorporated navigational assistance into their plan for supporting long-range patrols and oriented cavalymen behind enemy lines by periodically firing rounds at their maximum range along a pre-determined azimuth.<sup>68</sup> As in defensive operations, the 112th leaned heavily on the tools it had grown comfortable using over the course of three previous campaigns and again leveraged its absorptive capacity. Once familiar with the capabilities of these tools, the organization readily applied them in innovative ways.

One possible solution to the frustrating tactical situation west of the Shimbu Line forced the regiment to adopt a method deeply at odds with a view held by veteran cavalymen of all ranks. Troopers emerged from the Arawe operation conceding that small units needed to train at night in order to “overcome [the] natural fear of darkness and instill confidence and ability to move in the dark.”<sup>69</sup> However, leaders made no serious effort to improve at the time. Although the 112th routinely repulsed Japanese attacks that came after sundown, GIs refrained from their own night offensive operations, considering movement outside the perimeter (or even within it) not the worth the risks it posed. Lessons learned from the Driniumor and Leyte supported the

convention of stopping activity early enough in the evening to avoid exhausting the men and to afford them the opportunity to dig in before dark. Officers voiced the strongest opinions on the issue, and even Cunningham accepted that “night marches should be attempted in the jungle . . . only in the most urgent situations.”<sup>70</sup> This restriction applied to patrolling as well.

Tagged with the duty of reconnoitering the area west of Ipo Dam but faced with the dilemma of approaching those defenses across largely open ground, the 112th seemed ready to reconsider its stance on night operations. Patrols in the hours of darkness first took place in late February. One detachment’s success in confirming the location of a series of OPs with no loss in American lives encouraged the future use of the technique, and soon troops positioned west of the dam began regularly sending out patrols with the mission of performing reconnaissance or, on occasion, setting an ambush. These small units sometimes killed enemy soldiers, but the incidence of gunfights was sporadic. Patrols typically spent their time moving in the shadows under the moonlit sky, halting periodically to watch and listen before proceeding to their next objective. Primarily seeking targets for air strikes, artillery barrages, or possible daytime combat patrols, it was in their best interest to avoid contact, and they generally did so – sometimes with the help of scout dogs that alerted troopers to the presence of nearby Japanese.<sup>71</sup>

The regiment did not, of course, attempt to mimic its foe by conducting platoon or troop-sized assaults in hours of darkness, for this certainly would have surrendered many of the firepower advantages the GIs possessed. But the organization wasted little time before it realized the utility of employing a few patrols at night as a means of evading observation, penetrating the Japanese OP line, and then discovering something about the situation in the enemy rear. A surprising development given the cavalrymen’s well-documented aversion to this type of operation, it nevertheless illustrated the 112th’s ability to transform common practice when new conditions suggested or demanded a reinterpretation of that practice. Night patrols

were not what ultimately ground down the Ipo Dam defenses, but the RCT deemed them valuable enough to emphasize their importance as it prepared for the invasion of Japan.<sup>72</sup> New experiences had indeed brought about a new way of thinking.

The 112th was able to break away from an organizationally accepted norm and adopt a different technique in combat for a number of reasons. For one, the regiment approached the change gradually. It came after a string of daylight patrols had failed and was fully adopted only when initial attempts at the new tactic proved successful. Unlike Captain Johnson at Hot Corner, leaders had the time and opportunity to consider the implications of the change and determine how best to deal with it. With respect to patrolling, the unit had a substantial capacity to absorb new knowledge. It had acquired an appreciation for the value of small reconnaissance patrols as early as Arawe and had refined its abilities in this area during later campaigns. Once commanders accepted the necessity for night patrolling, GIs could draw on their previous experience to help them grasp more quickly the special skills associated with stealthy movement in hours of darkness. Reconnaissance patrols at night were, of course, not as complicated as squadron or troop attacks would have been, so the comparative simplicity of the knowledge allowed for its easy distribution among squad members. It did not take long, for example, to learn how to navigate by compass or with the help of the stars.<sup>73</sup> Given what the cavalrymen already knew about patrolling (and defending at night, for that matter), the process of incorporating a new tactic was largely incremental. Discontinuous – or radical – change was unnecessary.

The continuous improvement effort that occurred in patrolling operations differed sharply from the 112th's performance in an unfamiliar task conducted under urgent circumstances. The first squadron-sized offensive operation on Luzon demonstrated that the Japanese still had the capability to precipitate a crisis when the 112th's experience and training

fell short of what the situation demanded. At the end of March, XI Corps unhinged the southern flank of the Shimbu Line and intensified its attacks on the central portion. Anticipating the next step to be an all-out assault on the Ipo area to the north, the corps commander ordered Cunningham to conduct a reconnaissance-in-force east along the Metropolitan Road with the intent of testing the enemy's defenses there. Since February, the cavalrymen had been gradually pushing the OP line toward the Bigti-Norzagaray road through patrolling and periodic platoon attacks. The new mission constituted a tougher assignment. Accordingly, XI Corps placed the 169th Infantry Regiment under Cunningham's control. In past campaigns, superiors had created similar ad hoc organizations to augment the 112th for a particular operation, and, each time, they could not resist naming the reinforced RCT after its commander's most distinguishing physical characteristic. Baldy Force went forward on 7 April.<sup>74</sup>

The advance began on a promising note but soon degraded into a near disaster. While one battalion from the 169th approached from the southwest, the 112th's 1st Squadron made an eastward thrust just to the north of the Metropolitan Road. Grant accomplished his initial goal when Troops A and B – both under the direction of Captain Lamar Boland – overran an OP and then consolidated on the objective, a wooded ridge about four miles west of Ipo Dam. After this opening success, the situation only got worse. Soldiers endured an hour-long barrage the night of the 8th and remained on edge throughout the following day thanks to continuous Japanese pressure. At least a platoon of enemy infantry sidestepped the position and established a trail block along the route leading back to the squadron CP, cutting off Boland and ambushing litter and ration trains on their way to support him. Grant dispatched a few squads of Captain Frank Fyke's C Troop, in reserve until this point, to reduce the trail block, but the rescuers themselves fell victim to an ambush. Fyke and about half of the relief column managed to make it to

Boland's CP, and the two seasoned troop commanders conferred amid the clamor of rifle and shellfire.

The best contingency seemed obvious. The position the cavalrymen occupied was covered with tall grass and strewn with car-sized boulders, dangerously limiting fields of fire. Though the cavalrymen had held thus far, the perimeter was increasingly untenable given its vulnerable supply line and reports that two hundred Japanese were assembling to counterattack. Nearly all the troopers had drained their canteens on that hot day and were beginning to suffer from thirst. Moreover, Boland had several wounded that required medical attention, including himself and Fyke. It also dawned on the pair of captains that the mission had been accomplished. Troops A and B had broken through the outpost line and had provoked an energetic reaction from the enemy defending Ipo Dam. In doing so, the reconnaissance-in-force suggested that something much stronger than a regiment would be needed to reduce the northern section of the Shimbu Line. Balancing all of this against the dangers of staying put, Grant, Miller, and Cunningham could not help but agree. The order was given for Boland's detachment to fall back at twilight.

The unit conducted this maneuver without a great deal of grace. Inherently difficult, the withdrawal under pressure proved even more challenging for the 112th because its troopers had never experienced anything like it. In the chaotic retrograde operation, men got separated from their outfits and friendly casualties were left behind.<sup>75</sup> One sergeant sent to gather stragglers along the route observed a lieutenant running away from the action and exhorting those around him to keep up. Subsequent patrols recovered equipment scattered throughout the area in the weeks that followed.<sup>76</sup>

The botched withdrawal in the aftermath of the reconnaissance-in-force signified the danger even seasoned combat units courted when they were compelled to perform an unfamiliar

task. Thus, it goes to show that organizations demonstrating evidence of learning do not necessarily learn every time. On the contrary, certain conditions impose limitations on the ability of organizations to adapt. The capacity to absorb new knowledge is low in instances where prior experience provides little context to help group members deal with the challenges of utterly new situations. Similarly, when a unit lacks the time to interpret and distribute new knowledge, it incurs a disadvantage vis-à-vis organizations that have the opportunity for continuous improvement in an environment that permits them to learn an unfamiliar task incrementally.

Having determined from the reconnaissance-in-force that it would much more than a reinforced regiment to capture Ipo Dam, Sixth Army relieved the 112th of its responsibilities in the sector during first week of May. The RCT shifted its locus of activity south and east to the Antipolo area, where patrols generated almost daily contacts with an enemy on the brink of collapse. Indeed, the situation for the Japanese on Luzon was deteriorating rapidly almost everywhere, particularly after an XI Corps attack eliminated the Ipo Dam pocket on the heels of the 112th's departure. By mid-May, U.S. forces had secured Manila Bay and had bloodied the Kembu and Shimbu concentrations to the point of rendering them incapable of mounting anything more than company or platoon-sized operations. Only the Shobu Group in the north remained intact (with well over fifty thousand soldiers, it would continue to fight until Tokyo's surrender).<sup>77</sup> Thus, for the rest of the campaign, the 112th saw little in the way of intense combat.

From their new base camps some fifteen miles east of Manila, Cunningham's troopers searched for the enemy's scattered remnants in the rugged foothills and mountains that only weeks before had anchored the Shimbu Line's left flank to the large freshwater lake of Laguna de Bay. Sometimes patrols ran into Japanese detachments strong enough to hold off the

cavalrymen and make good their escape. Over time though, meeting engagements increasingly resulted in the destruction of the enemy or the taking of prisoners. In early June, Sixth Army ordered a large-scale sweep of the area east of Antipolo and created an ad hoc organization built around the RCT to conduct this operation. Thus for several weeks, two regiments from the 1st Cavalry Division were placed under Cunningham's command. The general's staff dealt with the challenge of coordinating the widespread movements of multiple subordinate organizations, but the nature of the troopers' activity remained very much the same – frequent small-unit actions in rough terrain against sick and half-starved Japanese soldiers. Only occasionally did contact with the enemy flare up into fierce firefights.<sup>78</sup>

The official end of Sixth Army's Luzon campaign came on 30 June, and, with that pronouncement, the 112th retired to its encampment around Antipolo. Yet the termination of major combat did not mean an end to the RCT's challenges. Since January, leaders had viewed the return to "civilization" as a mixed blessing. Cooperation with local guerrillas bolstered unit manpower and assisted the cavalrymen as they navigated unfamiliar geographical and cultural terrain. However, supplying these forces proved problematic at times, and, on one occasion, the necessity to broker a peace between rival groups constituted a major distraction. Likewise, despite a supportive indigenous populace, concerns related to civil affairs dogged commanders throughout the campaign. Issues regarding the interaction of troopers and Filipinos in and around camp were particularly troublesome, and the absence of a serious enemy threat only accentuated the difficulties of controlling the behavior of idle GIs.<sup>79</sup>

Although security patrols in the local area continued, the primary mission at Antipolo became one of unit reconstitution followed quickly by preparation for the invasion of Japan, an operation that cavalrymen fully expected to stand in stark contrast with the lop-sided engagements May and June had seen. Rebuilding an organization understrength to begin with

and afflicted by personnel turnover added a measure of urgency to the task of getting ready.<sup>80</sup> Leaders took stock of their units' capabilities and structured a training plan with an eye toward the regiment's anticipated role in the assault on the home islands. Freshest in their minds were the lessons learned during the six months spent fighting on Luzon.

The 112th Cavalry Regiment met with a fair degree of success in combat with the Japanese on Luzon from February to July 1945. It generally adapted to the diverse challenges of this campaign by acquiring new knowledge from internal and external sources, interpreting that knowledge to make it suitable for tactical application, and distributing it through formal and informal methods for others within the organization to apply. Like the challenges the regiment confronted, the process by which it learned was anything but simple. Learning occurred differently at multiple levels of the organization. How subordinate elements learned depended on the specific knowledge involved. Throughout the campaign, the soldiers' previous experience and the input of higher headquarters had an impact in a variety of ways as well.



## Notes

<sup>1</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 31 December 1944, RG 407, NA; HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in the Leyte Campaign,” *ibid.*; Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign,” *ibid.*

<sup>2</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 31 December 1944-13 January 1945, RG 407, NA; Miller Journal, 1-14 January 1945, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>3</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 13-26 January 1945, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, “Historical Report, 27 January 1945 to 30 June 1945,” 15 July 1945, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18085, Entry 427 [hereafter “Historical Report (Luzon)”], cover sheet, *ibid.*

<sup>4</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, “Report of the Luzon Campaign, 9 January 1945-30 June 1945,” vol. 1, 1, 17-26, 106-0.3, Box 2401, Entry 427, RG 407, NA; Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 94-97. Of the two other concentrations, Shobu Group was the largest, consisting of over 150,000 men and occupying the portion of Luzon east and north of Lingayen Gulf. The thirty-thousand-strong Kembu Group took up positions in the mountains west of the Central Plains.

<sup>5</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 5-8 February 1945, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Luzon),” 1-9 February 1945, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> “Historical Report (Luzon),” 9 February-2 April 1945, RG 407, NA; HQ, Sixth Army, “Luzon Campaign,” vol. 1, 37-41, 72-73, *ibid.*; Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 367-68. As the fight in Manila reached its climax, Krueger ordered an attack on the Shimbu Line in order to secure the Ipo and Wawa Dams. The general considered these facilities important because they were thought to control substantial quantities of Manila’s water supply. He directed XIV Corps to launch its initial thrust directly east of the Philippine capital toward Wawa Dam. In the meantime, the 112th maintained its patrolling operations as it screened the corps’ left flank and along the main supply route.

<sup>7</sup> “Historical Report (Luzon),” 9-10 February 1945, RG 407, NA; “Regimental Diary,” 10 February 1945, *ibid.*; Frank C. Fyke, “Cavalry Troop (Dismounted) in the Defense,” 27 May 1946, 2-4, Personal Experience Monograph, The Cavalry School, Fort Riley, KS, Dunlap Collection; Grant interview, 33, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Fyke, “Cavalry Troop,” 3-4, Dunlap collection.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, 4-5.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 11-15 February 1945, RG 407, NA; HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, “S-2-3 Report, 27 January 1945 to 18 June 1945,” 12 February 1945, Journal/Diary, Luzon, CAVR-112-0.3.0, Box 18089, Entry 427 [hereafter “1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (handwritten)”], *ibid.*; Fyke, “Cavalry Troop,” 8-12, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>12</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 16-19, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Aitape),” 17, *ibid.*; Moody, “Training of the 112th,” 3, Dunlap Collection; Hooper tape recording, October 2001, *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> Fyke, "Cavalry Troop," 14-15, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., 12-13. Fyke was certain that the American artillery bombardment killed many more enemy soldiers. Not counted were the numerous bodies almost surely evacuated by the Japanese during the night.

<sup>15</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, "Individual Viewpoints," 4, Annex 3 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," RG 407, NA.

<sup>16</sup> Fyke, "Cavalry Troop," 14, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>17</sup> Ibid., 7-8.

<sup>18</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 20, 9 October 1944, 1-4, RG 407, NA.

<sup>19</sup> Fyke, "Cavalry Troop," 3, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>20</sup> For the Driniumor campaign, the 37-mm guns remained in Aitape while the crews went forward to serve in other roles. The same seems to have occurred on Leyte – though initially the guns were positioned to defend against a possible enemy amphibious assault. "Historical Report (Aitape)," 1-2, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Leyte)," 12, *ibid.*; "Regimental Diary," 19 November 1944, *ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 42. Jackson notes that groups with a stable membership are more likely to make incremental improvements, thus gradually building up expertise.

<sup>22</sup> An examination of several related documents provides evidence of this process. For examples of lessons learned attributed by name to individual soldiers and then submitted collectively at the troop level, see Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Combat," 31 August 1944, RG 407, NA; and Troop E, 112th Cavalry, "Historical Report – Summary of Lessons Learned," 30 August 1944, *ibid.* Many of these lessons appeared in the compilation at regimental level (see "Historical Report (Aitape)," 15-18, RG 407, NA). The explicit connection senior leaders wished to establish between lessons learned and training can be seen in HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 1, 17 August 1944, *ibid.* A similar process occurred after the Leyte operation. For example, see Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign," 4 January 1945, RG 407, NA; and HQ, 112th RCT, "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> Fyke, "Memoirs," 22, Dunlap Collection. See also, Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign," RG 407, NA, where a comment attributed to Corporal Eckhardt read, "The older men know what to do and I have noticed that they do all in their power to help the green men get battle-wise in the shortest time possible."

<sup>24</sup> Jackson explains a number of characteristics and circumstances that affect learning, including the nature of group communications mechanisms, stability of membership, and the nature of the group's operational environment. Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 40, 42-43.

<sup>25</sup> Fyke, "Cavalry Troop," 10-11, Dunlap Collection. Quote on p.11.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., 8-12; "1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (handwritten)," 12-14 February 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>27</sup> Fyke, "Cavalry Troop," 11-12, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>28</sup> Cunningham and Hooper, interview by Smith, 1, USAMHI; HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, G-3 Journal, 11 December 1944, USAASRL; "Historical Report (Leyte)," 6, RG 407, NA; Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign," *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Fyke, "Cavalry Troop," 9, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid., 11.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid., 12.

<sup>32</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, "Supply of Troops by L-4 Aircraft," 1-3, Annex 1 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," RG 407, NA.

<sup>33</sup> Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 41.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.

<sup>35</sup> "Regimental Diary," 16, 18, and 25 June 1945, RG 407, NA; Grant interview, 40, Dunlap Collection; McMains interview, 47-48, *ibid.*; Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 421.

<sup>36</sup> "Regimental Diary," 11-13 April 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>37</sup> Frank C. Fyke, "A Reconnaissance-in-Force By 1st Squadron of the 112th Cavalry, 9 April 1945," 31 August 1997, 5, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>38</sup> On 16 February, an artillery barrage killed 2 and wounded 40, including 12 guerrillas. Another bombardment on 9 April killed 7 and wounded 21. "Regimental Diary," 16 February 1945, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Luzon)," 9 April 1945, *ibid.*

<sup>39</sup> Malcolm N. Moody to David O. Hale, 9 December 1992, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>40</sup> "Regimental Diary," 15 February 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>41</sup> The concept of absorptive capacity, as discussed in Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, 41, applies to more than just knowledge in the form of new technology. It can also involve new techniques.

<sup>42</sup> See "Regimental Diary," 17, 23 March, 17, 22 April, and 17, 20 May 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>43</sup> Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 13-15, 40. Explicit knowledge can be easily disseminated throughout the organization once it is preserved in physical form. Tacit knowledge is often intuitive in nature. Thus, its distribution is largely reliant on face-to-face exchanges.

<sup>44</sup> "Regimental Diary," 22 February 1945, RG 407, NA; HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, "S-2-3 Report, 11 February 1945 to 20 February 1945," 17-18 February 1945, 18-19 February 1945, Patrol

Reports, Luzon, CAVR-112-SQ(1)-2.11, Box 18094, Entry 427 [hereafter "1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (typed)"], *ibid.*

<sup>45</sup> "Regimental Diary," 26 February, 1-3 March 1945, RG 407, NA; "1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (handwritten)," 26 February 1945, *ibid.* In late February and early March, guerrillas and civilians periodically alerted the 112th to the continued movement of Japanese units northeast through the 1st Squadron sector and toward Ipo Dam. See "Regimental Diary," 28 February, 2 March 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>46</sup> "Historical Report (Luzon)," 20 February-6 March 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>47</sup> For examples, see "Regimental Diary," 17 April, 23 May, and 30 June 1945, RG 407, NA; and "Historical Report (Luzon)," 13-20 May 1945, *ibid.*

<sup>48</sup> See "Regimental Diary," 3, 17, 23 March, 17, 22 April, and 17, 20 May 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>49</sup> Robert Taylor Bray, "World War II Reminiscences of Robert Taylor Bray," 221, World War II Veterans Survey – Infantry Regiments (Separate), USAMHI.

<sup>50</sup> *Ibid.*, 221, 232.

<sup>51</sup> Fyke, "Reconnaissance-in-Force," 2, 4, Dunlap Collection; Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 405.

<sup>52</sup> "Regimental Diary," 14-17 February 1945, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Luzon)," 17 February 1945, *ibid.*; "1st Squadron S-2-3 Report (typed)," 16-17 February 1945, *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> For other examples, see "Historical Report (Luzon)," 13-14, 18 February 1945, RG 407, NA; Waite Journal, 29, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>54</sup> Quoted in "Historical Report (Aitape)," 15, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Arawe)," 14, *ibid.*

<sup>55</sup> "Historical Report (Aitape)," 15, RG 407, NA.

<sup>56</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," 3-4, RG 407, NA.

<sup>57</sup> "Regimental Diary," 19 February 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>58</sup> For two separate incidents of the 112th's approach to cave defenses on Luzon, see "Regimental Diary," 15-16 March 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>59</sup> "Historical Report (Arawe)," 17-18, RG 407, NA; Troop C, 112th Cavalry, "Lessons Learned in Combat," 31 August 1944, 2-3, 6, 8, *ibid.*; Troop E, 112th Cavalry, "Historical Report – Summary of Lessons Learned," 30 August 1944, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th RCT, "Individual Viewpoints," 1-4, Annex 3 to "Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte," *ibid.*; Smith, "Comments and Off-the-record Remarks to Cunningham-Hooper Interview," USAMHI.

<sup>60</sup> Regimental diary entries throughout March 1945 support this description of patrolling activity.

<sup>61</sup> Waite Journal, 32-33, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>62</sup> Allen H. Benton, "The Story of Two Combat Patrols, May 1945," n.d., Dunlap Collection. In his account of a separate incident, trooper William McDonnell also suggested that higher headquarters briefed outgoing patrols before their departure and that patrol leaders relied on this tactical intelligence to guide their actions. McDonnell and his comrades encountered a group of armed Filipinos whose affiliation was unknown. Were they Makapilis loyal to the enemy, a party of Hukbalahaps (anti-Japanese but ideologically communist and, thus, not above suspicion), or one of the many guerrilla detachments cooperating with U.S. forces? In describing the patrol's actions, McDonnell implied the existence of a procedure for dealing with such confrontations, as well as the presumption of reliable information flow within the RCT. McDonnell, "Rarin' to Go," 43-44, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>63</sup> See for example, HQ Troop, 112th Cavalry, "Patrol Report," 23 February 1945 and 24 March 1945; Troop F, 112th Cavalry, "Report on Combat Patrol to Minalungao," 1 March 1945; HQ, 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, "Patrol Report," 4 April 1945; all in Patrol Reports, 28 January-12 November 1945, CAVR-112-2.11, Box 18092, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>64</sup> Claude R. Rigsby, interview by author, Dallas, TX, 13 October 2001, author's collection; Allen H. Benton, "One Dark Night in Luzon," 4, n.d., Dunlap Collection; Benton, "Two Combat Patrols," *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> For example, see Allen H. Benton, tape recording, 2002, author's collection. Benton recalled the eagerness of veterans to share the regiment's recent history with newcomers. To astute listeners like Benton, the informal medium of storytelling conveyed lessons relevant to the unit's future performance, including tips on how to improve one's chances of personal survival.

At least one other enlisted man put these stories to good use. Norman Mailer joined the 112th on Luzon but incorporated episodes from previous campaigns into his novel *The Naked and the Dead*. The most obvious example is the disastrous rubber boat landing attempted by the 112th's Troop A at Arawe. Mailer's fictional reconnaissance platoon had suffered through the same catastrophe (pp. 16-17). One can find parallels with Sergeant Croft's desperate stand on a river line against waves of Japanese attackers (pp. 148-55); General Cummings' merciless interrogation of a noncommissioned officer accused of "faking a patrol" (pp. 314-16); and Major Dalleson's unusual but impressive talent for shooting pebbles tossed in the air with his carbine (pp. 236, 249-51) (Hooper's own feats of marksmanship were legendary in the regiment). Likewise, it is not hard to see how chapters from the 112th's prior operations informed Mailer's vivid descriptions of moving through the jungle at night (pp. 44-45 and 130-32), trudging up and down steep ridges and ravines (pp. 505-6), transporting wounded men over tough terrain (pp. 620-22), and enduring torrential tropical downpours (pp. 95-100). All of this is not to suggest, of course, that Mailer's literary imagination was limited to what his fellow troopers related to him. However, it does show that, in writing *The Naked and the Dead*, he drew on certain elements of the 112th's past experience. To a large extent, this ability depended on the unit's practice of transferring its "history" – where it had been and what it had learned – to replacements.

<sup>66</sup> Miller Journal, 7 March 1945, Dunlap Collection; "Regimental Diary," 24-28 February 1945, RG 407, NA; "Historical Report (Luzon)," 28 February 1945, *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> "Regimental Diary," 23 February, 1, 8, 19, 28-29 March 1945, RG 407, NA. Experienced patrol leaders equipped with handheld radios also took a toll on the Japanese with their own calls for fire. Rigsby interview, author's collection.

<sup>68</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 6-7 March 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>69</sup> “Historical Report (Arawe),” 18, RG 407, NA.

<sup>70</sup> “Historical Report (Aitape),” 17, RG 407, NA; Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Combat,” 31 August 1944, 15, *ibid.*; Troop F, 112th Cavalry, “Summary of Lessons Learned,” 30 August 1944, 2, *ibid.*; Troop C, 112th Cavalry, “Lessons Learned in Leyte Campaign,” 4 January 1945, *ibid.*

<sup>71</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 28 February, 8 March-6 April 1945, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Luzon),” 23 February 1945, *ibid.*; Campos interview, author’s collection.

<sup>72</sup> The memorandum outlining the unit’s training program following the Luzon campaign specifically mentioned training at night in three separate instances. In contrast, a similar document published after the Driniumor fight – when Miller complained of “too much movement of troops after dark” – contained no references to the subject at all. See Miller Journal, 29 July 1944, Dunlap Collection; HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 1, 17 August 1944, RG 407, NA; and HQ, 112th Cavalry, Training Memorandum No. 8, 26 June 1945, 3-4, Historical Report (Part Three), CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18085, Entry 427, *ibid.*

<sup>73</sup> Benton, “Two Combat Patrols,” Dunlap Collection; Campos interview, author’s collection.

<sup>74</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, “History of the Luzon Campaign,” vol. 1, 72-74, RG 407, NA.

<sup>75</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 7-9 April 1945, RG 407, NA; Fyke, “Reconnaissance-in-Force,” 2-4, Dunlap Collection. Casualties from Troops A and B on the day of the withdrawal were 6 men killed, 30 wounded, and 8 missing in action.

<sup>76</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 12, 24 April 1945, RG 407, NA; Benton, “One Dark Night on Luzon,” 2, Dunlap Collection. Abandoned during the withdrawal were 8 machine guns, 2 60-mm mortars, and 11 carbines and rifles. HQ, 112th RCT, S-4 Journal, 11 April 1945, S-4 Annex, Historical Report (Part Three), CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18085, Entry 427, RG 407, NA .

<sup>77</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, “Luzon Campaign,” vol. 1, 74-76, RG 407, NA. For an account of Sixth Army’s operations against the Shobu Group in northern Luzon, see Smith, *Triumph in the Philippines*, 558-79.

<sup>78</sup> “Historical Report (Luzon),” 3 May-30 June 1945, RG 407, NA. With their move to Antipolo, the troopers detected a marked decline in the capabilities of the Japanese in the area. Summing up the enemy’s activity, one GI recalled that “they seemed bent on avoiding trouble, content to hide by day and prowl by night, coming into our lines in desperate attempts to sneak into our food supplies.” He was quick to point out that “there were still a few hard-noses . . . who would indulge in the old tactics of ambush, night attack, and an occasional Banzai charge.” McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 44-45, Dunlap Collection. Cavalrymen had to adjust to the general collapse of the opposing force while remaining prepared to deal with those small groups of Japanese soldiers still willing and able to offer resistance.

<sup>79</sup> For example, see “Historical Report (Luzon),” 14, 25-26 February, 1 June 1945, RG 407, NA; “Regimental Diary,” 22-24 February 1945, *ibid.*; HQ, 112th RCT, Bulletins No. 5 (17 February 1945), No.

7 (28 February 1945), and No. 15 (15 May 1945), Historical Report (Part One), CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18085, Entry 427, *ibid.*; and Waite Journal, 41, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>80</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 1 July-14 August 1945, RG 407, NA. The RCT began the Luzon operation in January with 130 officers and 2,191 enlisted men assigned out of an authorized strength of 153 and 2,478, respectively. It ended the campaign in June with a comparable amount (125 and 2,087). In the interim though, the RCT received close to 750 replacements while suffering over 200 casualties. Moreover, in late June, nearly 400 men departed the unit under the auspices of the Army’s readjustment program. See HQ, 112th RCT, “Strength of Command By Unit or Detachment,” 17 January 1945 and 30 June 1945, as well as S-1 Report No. 1 (10-17 January 1945) through No. 25 (26-30 June 1945); both in S-1 Journal, Historical Report (Part One), CAVR-112-0.3, Entry 427, Box 18085, RG 407, NA.

Longtime veteran William McDonnell observed with some surprise that the policy of rotating “high-point men” back to the United States – though intended to improve GI morale – actually had the opposite effect. In his view, it also reduced combat effectiveness. “The old pros, whose know-how and example made . . . units what they were, suddenly became overly prone to pulling in their heads,” he wrote. “The less experienced did likewise. . . . We were now in a defensive position with a thoroughly defensive attitude. It was fortunate that we were contending with an all but beaten enemy.” By the time McDonnell himself rotated home, only fourteen men from the Troop G contingent that had deployed overseas in 1942 remained on the unit rolls. McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 45-46, Dunlap Collection.

## CHAPTER VIII

### ENEMIES INTO FRIENDS: THE OCCUPATION OF JAPAN

The announcement of Japan's unconditional surrender on 15 August 1945 brought with it the appointment of General Douglas MacArthur as Supreme Commander of Allied Powers (SCAP), as well as a dramatic change in mission for U.S. forces in the Pacific. Shifting their focus away from the projected invasion of the home islands, staffs at theater and army level set in motion Operation BLACKLIST, a contingency plan for the occupation of Japan and parts of Korea should enemy resistance end suddenly. The central task of participating units involved the disarmament and demobilization of the Japanese military, with a strength of 4.9 million armed troops in the home islands alone. Though foregoing the bloody amphibious assaults that planners anticipated, BLACKLIST was still a complex undertaking that included over twenty-two divisions, plus air and naval elements.<sup>1</sup>

This complexity entailed much more than a high number of moving parts. As members of the occupation force, soldiers of the 112th Cavalry faced a remarkable challenge. They had to administer the terms of Japan's surrender only weeks after they had been concerned with simply killing or capturing the enemy on Luzon. Effort spent gearing up for a contested landing on the beaches of Kyushu seemed unhelpful to the new assignment of occupation duty. Indeed, the uncertainty of what those specific duties would be created a great deal of anxiety for senior leaders as the RCT's arrival at Tokyo Bay drew near. The problem of responding to an utterly unfamiliar situation and making a substantial change in behavior without adequate preparation loomed again.

Yet Japanese cooperation made the environment a rather forgiving one for the troopers. The missteps of GIs due to incompetence, unruliness, or cultural insensitivity never came close



to provoking an explosive confrontation with local civilians. Likewise, apprehension regarding the occupiers' safety as they moved about in a population of former enemies proved unwarranted, especially in light of the attitudinal transformation that occurred in American soldiers confounded by the friendliness of the population. Despite the unfamiliar mission then, the 112th was able to build upon its past experience and learn incrementally as its men oversaw the disarmament and demobilization of a once bitter foe until the RCT's own deactivation in January 1946.

The cavalymen of the 112th learned of the Japanese capitulation as they weathered the early stages of Luzon's monsoon season in their camp at Antipolo, ten miles east of Manila. Operations since July consisted of local patrols against a malnourished, poorly equipped, and disorganized enemy.<sup>2</sup> At the same time though, the troopers began girding themselves for a more demanding mission, the forthcoming invasion of the Japanese home islands – an assault they contemplated with trepidation. Thus, among the men of the 112th, reaction to news of the emperor's surrender consisted of relief and sober reflection. Sergeant Allen H. Benton recalled his outfit's reserved response to the radio broadcast announcing Allied victory: "There was no wild celebrating. . . . [W]e had been walking in the shadow of death, and we all knew it. We left the mess hall almost in a daze, and walked quietly back to our tents, where we talked about the probabilities of our next step, and the now imminent possibility that we would soon be going home."<sup>3</sup> To Philip Hooper, the RCT's chief of staff, word of the war's end came as "an absolute shock." Overseas for over three years with the regiment, Hooper was "totally unprepared for . . . peace at that moment. . . . It [had] evaded us [for] so long." Leaving the command post, he walked alone for a half-mile and in seclusion sat down on a log, "trying to absorb what was happening."<sup>4</sup>

With the pronouncement of V-J Day, training for the RCT's part in the planned Sixth Army assault on Kyushu stopped before it had even begun. The first phase of the unit's sixteen-week program was scheduled to start around mid-August. During this period, the leadership of the 112th intended to practice a broad set of individual and collective skills, including amphibious landings and assaulting fortified positions. Moreover, the training would help prepare some six hundred recent replacements for the intense fighting many veterans expected to experience on the home islands. In spite of the slackening resistance on Luzon, Cunningham maintained an emphasis on combat-related tasks. He hoped the training program would produce "thoroughly coordinated squadron and regimental combat teams indoctrinated with the spirit of the offensive" and ready to "continue vigorous prosecution of the war against Japan."<sup>5</sup>

The shift in focus came rapidly, and the 112th had little time to consider the nature of its new mission or how to prepare for and accomplish it. The day after the Japanese surrender, it was assigned to Eighth U.S. Army and, on 17 August, began to organize vehicles and equipment for a possible short-notice deployment. Two days later, initial elements departed for the port of Batangas, and, by the 23d, the entire RCT had assembled there. Troopers completed loading the following evening and received official notification of their destination by way of an RCT field order. Escorted by combat air patrols and maintaining blackout conditions for the entire journey, the convoy sailed on 25 August and entered Tokyo Bay the morning of 2 September. Along the way, members of the RCT learned their landing craft assignments and executed debarkation drills. Units gave briefings on the terrain characterizing the sector that the 112th would soon occupy. Probably to help counteract the effects of boredom, leaders also taught classes on the wear of wet and cold-weather clothing, held abandon-ship exercises, and conducted several inspections.<sup>6</sup> In short – despite staying busy – the cavalymen got hardly any training to prepare them for occupation duty.

This lack of preparation was mainly a product of the limited time available, but it also indicated just how little the senior leaders of the RCT knew about the specifics of their impending mission. Hooper, for example, remembered receiving from higher headquarters only general guidance on disarmament procedures and warnings on the forms that Japanese attempts at sabotage might take. The question of exactly what to do once ashore went unanswered. This was not lost on the GIs. Private Robert Bray recalled the 112th's struggle to prepare its men for what awaited them and, in his memoirs, noted glibly, "My guess is our cadre knew no more about occupying Japan than the troops did."<sup>7</sup>

To offset some of the uncertainty, Cunningham (perhaps informed by a higher-level directive) drafted a list of rules for his soldiers. It contained specific prohibitions against fraternizing, entering homes or religious shrines, and frequenting houses of prostitution but offered few practical instructions concerning disarmament or interaction with the population. According to the RCT commander, success would be determined in large measure by "discipline, appearance, and common sense."<sup>8</sup> As sketchy as these qualities seem as a basis for action at the tactical level, their emphasis at least indicated that senior leaders recognized just how different BLACKLIST would be from combat operations on Leyte or Luzon.

Nevertheless, while details on the conduct of the occupation remained vague, Cunningham and Hooper did not fret about how their soldiers would perform once they landed. The 112th had fought successfully against the Japanese in four previous campaigns. Senior leaders placed high value on this experience and had relied on it in the past whenever difficult circumstances confronted the regiment. Now, on the verge of arriving in Japan, they believed that it would be enough to deal with whatever initial challenges arose.<sup>9</sup> A core of seasoned commanders at squadron and troop level served to alleviate the concerns Cunningham may have harbored about the discipline of the GIs. For his part, Hooper did not expect any trouble from

them. Comfortable with separating in his mind the displays of recklessness he observed on Luzon from the men's ability to show restraint toward a potentially hostile populace, he did not expect any "wild rifle shots" or "loose attitudes" to jeopardize the mission.<sup>10</sup>

Cunningham's chief worries revolved around the Japanese and how they would react to the occupation. His memorandum reflected the insecurity, concern, and even fear that he and other senior leaders in the 112th felt as they approached this new encounter with their recently defeated enemy. As a precaution, the troopers were to be armed at all times and were not authorized to leave the immediate bivouac area unless traveling in groups of four or more. "In general, it is believed that [the Japanese] will comply with the orders of their Emperor," Cunningham wrote. "However, it is practically certain that there will be hostile acts committed, either by fanatical individuals, members of . . . secret societies . . . or . . . isolated military personnel." He concluded by reminding the cavalymen that they were members of the first "conquering force" to invade the Japanese homeland. With that proud but somewhat troubling thought in mind, the RCT commander warned his soldiers: "You are *not* going to be popular and you must exercise extreme care that no act of yours, *unless in the line of duty*, provokes a disturbance which may cost us many casualties."<sup>11</sup> Whether or not the general truly expected his troopers to meet armed resistance is unclear. Though alarmist in retrospect, his instructions show that it was not hard for him to imagine American soldiers becoming easy targets for saboteurs or vicious mobs. To handle such contingencies if they transpired, Cunningham could only suggest that his "conquering force" remain vigilant and "use common sense."<sup>12</sup> Given limited guidance from higher headquarters, he could offer little more.

A peaceful day in Tokyo Bay and some clarification on the scope of the mission calmed the fears of leaders and soldiers. Anchored fifteen hundred yards from the U.S.S. *Missouri* during the 2 September surrender ceremony, troopers of the 112th marveled at the impressive

display of Allied airpower, as hundreds of planes circled the skies above the vanquished enemy's capital city. That evening, commanders met one last time to rehash the sequence of the next day's landing at Tateyama Naval Air Station, located at the tip of the Chiba Peninsula.<sup>13</sup> In the early morning hours of 3 September, the RCT's transport steamed the short distance to the debarkation point and hove to at 0700. Boats shuttled Japanese military and civilian officials from the Tateyama area to the U.S.S. *Lavaca*, where they met with Cunningham and discussed (through a Japanese civilian interpreter) the details of the impending occupation. From the start, the potential for Japanese cooperation seemed promising. Prior to 26 August, nearly thirty thousand soldiers, sailors, and policemen had garrisoned the city and its environs. At the time of the meeting, only sixteen hundred armed personnel remained in the local area, mainly as guards for materiel dumps. The rest had been demobilized and sent home.<sup>14</sup>

After the receipt of this news, Cunningham explained the RCT's objectives, issued specific requests for information, and outlined the broad guidelines his troopers would adhere to as they carried out their mission. The 112th had three major goals: "Securing and disposing of certain military materiel; supervising civilian administration within the objective area; [and] releasing Prisoners of War and civilian internees."<sup>15</sup> The general informed the Japanese that his headquarters would establish a "Military Government Staff Section" that would oversee civil affairs, to include health and sanitation, the maintenance of law and order, public utilities and transportation, commerce and labor, and education and information. As an indicator of how essential local officials would be to this arrangement, Cunningham ordered his Japanese counterparts to provide his staff with a map that identified the location of key facilities in the area, such as communications installations, supply and munitions dumps, government buildings, refineries and fuel plants, penal institutions, and military posts. He echoed the sentiment of higher headquarters to oversee the affairs of the prefecture indirectly, declaring his intent "to

keep in office Japanese civilian officials who demonstrate a cooperative attitude and willingness to comply with the orders of this Headquarters, representing the United States Government.”<sup>16</sup>

The directives of the RCT commander also reflected a desire to limit informal interaction between nationals and U.S. troops while minimizing the potential for disturbances in general. Local officials were to shut down all liquor establishments and continue to enforce regulations concerning the sale of narcotics. The police in the Tateyama area were instructed to segregate prostitutes and to confiscate all weapons and ammunition belonging to civilians. Finally, Cunningham placed strict restrictions on popular gatherings. No more than ten individuals were permitted to assemble in public and all schools and theaters were to be closed. For their part, American soldiers would operate under the orders specified in the memorandum discussed above – with additional limitations protecting art and cultural objects and outlawing the molestation of civilians “unless in [the] line of duty.”<sup>17</sup>

According to the RCT’s historical report, the conference ended after about two-and-a-half hours “with the prospect of full cooperation.”<sup>18</sup> In the meantime, the landing got underway, with the first elements arriving at 0930. U.S. planes and ships covered the operation. However, this extra protective measure proved unnecessary, as did guidance in the 112th’s field order, which instructed the first units off the amphibious craft to secure a lodgment “of such depth as to prevent hostile small arms fire on the beach.”<sup>19</sup> Assisted by Major Lamar Boland, the RCT’s advanced party representative, and a complement of Japanese guides, “assault” troops came ashore via the air station’s seaplane ramp and established a perimeter around the naval base. Cunningham established his command post in the base headquarters building and relieved a detachment of U.S. Marines that had secured the area a few days previously. Meanwhile, his command came under the tactical control of the 11th Airborne Division, which had landed at an airfield near Tokyo on 30 August. The RCT was attached to the 11th Airborne through 7

September and afterwards reported directly to XI Corps. For the 112th, the occupation of Japan had begun.<sup>20</sup>

Though it was initially assigned to Tateyama and the southern half of the Chiba Peninsula, the RCT eventually assumed responsibility for the entire Chiba Prefecture, a political subdivision of some two thousand square miles. Extending from Tateyama, a city on the tip of the thin peninsula, to the northeastern outskirts of Tokyo, the 112th's area contained a few small cities, a smattering of rural villages, factories, and several military installations. The terrain varied markedly from cultivated rice paddies to thickly wooded, mountainous regions. The quality of roads and bridges differed, as well – some able to support military traffic, others troublesome for anything but light vehicles and likely to wash out after heavy rains. In contrast to the unreliable road network, the peninsula's rail system was excellent and proved to be crucial in the disarmament process.<sup>21</sup>

At first, the RCT divided its area into sectors and tasked its troops to patrol them. However, this method of organization became less useful only weeks into the occupation when the 112th's zone of responsibility expanded and the mission required subordinate elements to man fixed points dispersed across the length and width of the prefecture. To assist it with the occupation of such a large area, the RCT had the support of several specialized units. Though its howitzers would not be needed on Japan, the 148th Field Artillery Battalion remained in direct support of the 112th and joined the troopers at Tateyama. Many logistics detachments, including ammunition handlers, maintenance and communications personnel, and elements of a railhead company, were attached to the RCT. An engineer company, a chemical service platoon, a medical clearing company, and a malaria control unit also fell under Cunningham's command, as did military police and scout dog platoons. The 65th Army Ground Forces Band played key roles in two of the general's personal areas of concern – ceremonies and soldier entertainment.

A significant addition was the military government detachment that advised Cunningham with regard to his new administrative duties.<sup>22</sup>

The day after it arrived at Tateyama, the RCT took steps to carry out its primary mission – the disarmament and demobilization of military forces in its zone of responsibility. The efficiency and unexpected compliance of the Japanese made these potentially difficult tasks dramatically less complicated. Disarmament involved several phases, to include finding weapons and ammunition, collecting and inventorying them, guarding designated storage sites, and finally destroying this confiscated materiel. Before the 112th waded ashore, the Japanese army and navy had begun the process of disarmament, assembling in central collection points equipment that could be moved and destroying that which could not. The Japanese continued these efforts, but, in the meantime, it fell on the RCT to locate war materiel still scattered throughout the countryside. As one would expect from a relatively small force in such a vast and unfamiliar area, the unit was dependent on the aid of local civilians and military officials.

In the first days of the occupation, the subordinate troops of the RCT sent patrols into their assigned sectors in order to report on the condition of local roads and terrain and to search for military installation or stores of equipment. Such detachments consisted of an officer, four to eight enlisted men, and sometimes an interpreter. They usually traveled by jeep, departing in the morning to return in the afternoon. With tens of thousands of Japanese soldiers stationed on the peninsula prior to war's end, there was undoubtedly much equipment to be found.<sup>23</sup> Besides small arms, heavy weapons and armored vehicles, fuel and aircraft, explosives and ammunition, radar and radio stations, factories and machine shops that served military purposes, and military installations themselves all fell under the RCT's purview. Once found and moved to designated storage sites, items had to be inventoried prior to their destruction. As stated earlier, the Japanese handled much of this movement and accountability, but U.S. patrols performed the



crucial function of checking inventories. Such inspections generally testified to the defeated enemy's willingness to cooperate and their desire to complete the process of disarmament as rapidly as possible.<sup>24</sup>

On occasion, the troopers stumbled upon military equipment unexpectedly, as in the case of the 4 September patrol that found seventeen machine-guns and a couple of rocket launchers and grenade dischargers. Learning from the fifteen Japanese soldiers guarding the site that he had come upon a designated collection point, the lieutenant in charge took note and continued with his reconnaissance. Most certainly, GIs discovered arms and equipment that had simply not been reported. This occurred for example on 24 September when a patrol found that a military school still retained a collection of machine-guns, rifles, and grenade dischargers. The commander of the facility apparently had not received instructions to turn in the equipment. Incidents such as these were attributed more to Japanese oversight than to deceit.<sup>25</sup>

In the main, it seems that patrols were directed to storage sites by members of the RCT staff, who themselves became aware of these locations through their liaison with government officials. Maps and other documents turned over to Cunningham provided much of this information. Another source was Major Boland, who preceded patrols as they penetrated further up the peninsula. Making his way through the villages, he met with mayors, police chiefs, and local military commanders to pass on instructions and to gather data on the status of disarmament and demobilization.<sup>26</sup>

Over time, even civilians emerged as a reliable conduit of information. Frightened by the GIs at first, local Japanese soon proved "eager to help in any way."<sup>27</sup> On 9 October, the RCT's historical report noted, "The people . . . give valuable information on their own accord. . . . Timidity has by now been replaced with open curiosity and friendliness."<sup>28</sup> The same report declared that, after a month of searching the countryside, "[our] forces continue to locate military

stores in the form of arms and technical equipment, all of which is found with little difficulty because of the . . . cooperation of the . . . authorities and their people.”<sup>29</sup>

Patrols were encouraged not only by the attitude of the Japanese and their energetic assistance in the disarmament process but also at the state of the equipment they found, for much of it had already been rendered useless. On 4 September, for example, troopers discovered disabled coastal artillery pieces and antiaircraft guns. Four days later, another detachment came upon five eight-inch howitzers with the breechblocks removed. Entries in the historical report on 9 and 11 September were similar, each noting that several new intelligence targets were located – but that much or all of the equipment was unusable.

Of course, some heavy weapons had not been destroyed, but these posed few problems for the RCT. Patrols reported the location of functional arms, and Cunningham’s headquarters dispatched demolition teams from the 148th Field Artillery to neutralize those items overlooked by the Japanese. On 8 September, for instance, these detachments disabled seventeen artillery pieces. Patrols covering coastal areas operated in conjunction with the Navy to find and destroy what remained of a fleet of small craft hidden in water-filled caves. U.S. beach reconnaissance parties located 26 of these suspected “suicide” boats on 5 September and 76 more two days later. Later that month, detachments searching the eastern shore of the peninsula discovered over 100 similar craft that the U.S. Navy had destroyed.<sup>30</sup>

The 112th’s role in the demobilization of Japanese military personnel was largely supervisory. Already underway when the Americans arrived, the process was believed to be moving along quite rapidly. On 6 September, the unit established an outpost at the Tateyama railroad station in order to monitor the flow of departing Japanese soldiers. This appears to be the extent of RCT involvement until 27 September, when 1st Squadron (minus Troop B) moved to Mohara – a town forty miles up the peninsula – to oversee the demobilization of the 52d

Army. Dispatching a few hundred troopers to check the activities of a force of several thousand ex-enemies turned out to be entirely reasonable. According to the historical report, the situation seemed almost too good to be true: “The . . . ordnance at Mohara is in excellent condition; the weapons are clean and well-oiled; they have been inventoried and aligned in the armories. . . . Disarmament . . . is very well-organized. The Japanese seem very anxious to demobilize, and the mission . . . is being accomplished very quickly.”<sup>31</sup> Once the bulk of personnel at Mohara departed for their homes as civilians, elements of 1st Squadron shifted their efforts to the forces outside the city of Chiba, located on the west coast of the peninsula roughly fifty miles north of Tateyama.<sup>32</sup>

As the number of uniformed Japanese throughout the prefecture decreased, the 112th assumed a greater role in the manning of collection points. Because of the large amount of war materiel already present at military installations, these became major storage sites for confiscated arms and equipment. Troop B, the first element to leave Tateyama, arrived at Kisarazu Airfield, some thirty miles up the peninsula’s western coast, on 5 September. By mid-October, troop and platoon-sized detachments were stationed at several other installations throughout the prefecture and at least nine smaller outposts had been established.<sup>33</sup> Though it dispersed the subordinate units of the RCT, this arrangement posed no problem to the accomplishment of the mission – again due to Japanese compliance. No doubt, those assigned to guard duty witnessed some unique moments, such as the time when eighteen Bren Gun Carriers taken from the British at Singapore rolled into a storage site. On the night of 11 November, American guards at an Imperial Navy gunnery school drove off prowlers with a warning shot. Troopers manning another outpost did the same thing two weeks later when they detected infiltrators attempting to steal dynamite from a cave within their area of responsibility. For the most part, however, operations ran smoothly and without incident as military materiel continued to flow into the

assembly areas.<sup>34</sup> By the beginning of November, the collection of all arms and equipment in the Chiba Prefecture was 95 percent completed.<sup>35</sup> The next major task was to destroy it.

Allied policy dictated that the destruction of Japanese materiel take place, when possible, at dispersed collection points throughout the prefecture. Thus, by the most practical means – whether cutting, smashing, burning, or scrapping – Japanese laborers and technicians under the supervision of American soldiers disposed of numerous vehicles, planes, small arms, and the like at Tateyama, Kisarazu, and other military installations. Because of the inherent hazards, the handling and subsequent destruction of ammunition and explosives proved more complicated and time-consuming.

The dangers of disposing of such materiel became clear to the 112th on 20 September when a mid-afternoon explosion at the Japanese ammunition dump rocked the U.S. compound at Tateyama Naval Air Station. Two earth-shattering blasts shook the buildings and surrounding hills, sending men, equipment, and unexploded projectiles flying through the air. The RCT headquarters building, one mile away from the explosion, had three-quarters of its windows knocked out. Amid the broken glass, troopers found one solid 105-mm shell on the second floor. Terribly frightened, one first sergeant noted in his diary that over twenty-five projectiles landed around his troop area. Fires and smaller blasts continued throughout the night. An undetermined number of Japanese and Koreans were injured, as were seventy-two Americans – though all but twelve cases consisted of little more than superficial cuts, bruises, and burns. Miraculously, only one member of the RCT lost his life in the explosion. An investigation later found that the explosion occurred shortly after a crate of ammunition being carried by hapless Korean laborers began to smoke and burn.<sup>36</sup>

Ammunition disposal continued after a brief clean-up and recovery period following the explosion. The standard procedure involved gathering materiel at centralized collection points,

such as Kisarazu and Mohara, and transporting it by train to coastal dumps at Tateyama and Choshi, a site in the northeastern section of the prefecture – actually run by XI Corps. With Japanese labor details handling most of the assembly and movement, ammunition was loaded onto U.S. landing craft, taken out to sea, and dumped offshore at depths of six hundred feet. During October, workers stationed at Tateyama threw 1,225 tons overboard. The sheer quantity prolonged the operation for months. Amid comments regarding the smooth progress of operations, the historical report chronicled the frequent and seemingly never-ending flow of boxcars carrying the sensitive freight toward the coast. For a brief period in November, troopers at Tateyama could boast that they had cleaned out their ammunition dump while Choshi continued receiving materiel from the 52d Army demobilization point at Mohara. Nonetheless, shipments from Kisarazu resumed after a few days. Demobilized itself in January 1946, the 112th never finished the job, leaving twenty-six hundred tons of ammunition for its successors in the 1st Cavalry Division to destroy. In total, U.S. forces disposed of nearly 1.2 million tons of ammunition during the occupation.<sup>37</sup>

Despite learning the processes of disarmament and demobilization as it went, the 112th achieved considerable success. Though plucked out of tactical operations on the Philippines and plunged into a situation even its battle-hardened leaders had never experienced, the RCT reacted well. The essential skill for the task of disarmament proved to be patrolling, and the outfit had enough expertise in this area to readily adapt its techniques to the new environment. Yet, if a military organization's proficiency is judged in part by how it handles unexpected contingencies, then it is hard to offer a complete assessment of the 112th during the early stages of the occupation. The unit received substantial help from the Japanese, who were largely responsible for the stability of that environment.<sup>38</sup> In these benign conditions, the regiment could afford to learn incrementally, apart from the dangers that come with having to adapt under pressure and as

events quickly unfold. With only a few unimportant exceptions, the Japanese provided no opportunities for the unit to respond to a serious emergency that would cause it to use force or to even threaten the use of force. The RCT was successful but never truly tested. In this light, the cooperation of the Japanese was the decisive factor. Within the 112th, neither leaders nor soldiers anticipated it.

With little more than their combat experience in SWPA to guide them, the troopers found the Japanese attitude and its prevalence throughout the populace nothing less than astounding. In previous campaigns, men of the 112th had witnessed much more than the tenacity of the typical Japanese soldier. They had also seen his capacity for trickery and ruthlessness. During fighting on the Arawe Peninsula, intelligence reports included warnings that the deceptive Japanese had donned American uniforms, and, among the troopers, a rumor circulated that the enemy had beheaded a captured GI. Amid the ferocious battle on New Guinea's Driniumor River, one officer discovered that a Japanese soldier he had presumed to be dead was, in fact, very much alive and in possession of a knife. Investigating further, the cavalryman found four more enemy "dead" lying on their stomachs and hiding hand grenades.<sup>39</sup> More recently on Luzon, patrols reported seeing small groups of the enemy armed and dressed in civilian clothes on occasion, with some soldiers wearing women's attire in an effort to embellish the ruse.<sup>40</sup>

In the Luzon campaign, GI perception of the Japanese only hardened as many observed disturbing signs that seemed to confirm the opponent's fanaticism and capacity for committing atrocities. Once, a detachment from Headquarters Troop stumbled upon the body of a Japanese soldier who had committed suicide by placing a grenade on his stomach. In mid-February, a patrol passed through a village that had been burned to the ground and found four old Filipino women who had been bayoneted. The next day, other troopers discovered a more gruesome

sight – three dead civilians. All had been scalped. One – a woman – was beheaded and without limbs. Months later, cavalymen on patrol from Troop B surprised four Japanese in their encampment and killed them in a firefight. Afterwards, the GIs proceeded into the bivouac site and found clear evidence of cannibalism. According to the regimental diary, a patrol escorted an Army photographer to the location the following day, and he recorded the hideous scene: “. . . 3 buckets of flesh cut from the bodies of 3 Japs killed yesterday in this same area. The 3 bodies were stripped of flesh from the waist to the elbow, from thighs to the knees, about the neck, and one was castrated.”<sup>41</sup> On another occasion, the commander of Troop A made a similar discovery.<sup>42</sup>

These shocking images of Japanese in the combat zone stood in stark contrast to what the men of the 112th found when they landed on the home islands. Expecting difficult – perhaps deadly – challenges as they encountered a people with whom they associated myriad repulsive qualities, Cunningham and his troopers were understandably surprised when their “hosts” greeted them warmly. After the first full day of the occupation, the historical report noted that Japanese representatives – both civilian and military – “were most cooperative.” Leaders of the 112th were apparently suspicious, but the report went on to state that the officials “indicated a sincere desire to carry out all orders.”<sup>43</sup> On 18 September, the same document contained some observations suggesting the RCT’s astonishment at its good fortune: “The occupation continued its smooth progress. . . . Japanese officials . . . are as cooperative as ever. The civilians in the Tateyama area are quite accustomed to our presence now.”<sup>44</sup> Moreover, the cordial reception was not a passing phase. Through mid-October, there were still “no instances of failure to comply with surrender terms,” and, in November, it was reported that “the Japanese have continued to cooperate to the fullest extent.”<sup>45</sup>

This “cooperation,” as explained earlier, was remarkably evident during the routine procedures of disarmament and demobilization, but it was also apparent in the RCT’s dealings with civilian officials when minor, yet out of the ordinary, incidents occurred. When burglars attempted to break into a military facility guarded by the 112th, Cunningham turned the investigation over to the police. The next day, troopers caught two Japanese civilians committing a theft at the same outpost and released them to the local authorities. The RCT handled other criminal activity in a similar manner, suggesting a substantial level of trust in the capacity of civilian officials to enforce the law and monitor compliance on behalf of the U.S. military government. There were also indications of a sense of teamwork in carrying out the disarmament policies of the occupation, manifested most clearly when Tateyama authorities apprehended a former Japanese signal officer who had purposely withheld over twenty-five military radio sets from U.S forces. After this “sting” operation, the guilty party remained in police custody while awaiting a civilian trial. On another occasion, equipment and munitions were found at an unguarded marshalling area. Taking place over two months into the occupation, the discovery apparently generated quite a stir. Civilian police immediately secured the site, and the Japanese (ostensibly embarrassed) submitted an explanation of the previously unreported cache, thus satisfying the senior leaders of the 112th – who by this time had cast off their general suspicion of the Japanese people.

Only one “secret society” in the prefecture seems to have caused concern among the RCT leadership, and it was dismantled through the assistance of the Japanese government. In November, the Kaijin Kai, a private organization comprised of naval noncommissioned officers, drew the attention of Cunningham because of its drug-related activities. It relinquished its supplies without incident. The RCT disposed of the society’s narcotics in accordance with Eighth Army procedures but turned over the remainder of the Kaijin Kai’s confiscated



equipment to the Home Ministry.<sup>46</sup> In short, the 112th's willingness to rely on Japanese civilian authorities demonstrated a sense of trust on the part of Cunningham's "conquerors" and at the same time made harsh tactics unnecessary in the course of ensuring a state of law and order.

Relations between the RCT and civilian officials went beyond the mere conduct of occupation duties. Although it is difficult to discern the true motivations of the Japanese from American sources, the attitudes of local authorities seemed on the surface friendly and genuine and were accepted as such by the GIs. In the wake of the 20 September explosion in Tateyama, leaders of the 112th seemed touched the next day when an official from Japan's Foreign Office called on General Cunningham to express his condolences. While neglecting to mention the number of Japanese laborers injured in the blast, the historical report appreciatively noted the visit of Baron Hayashi, who "was happy that our casualties had not been serious."<sup>47</sup> Meetings with the baron and other high officials, such as the mayor of Tateyama and Governor Saito of Chiba, were unexceptionally cordial, as the Japanese worked to facilitate the mission of the occupation forces. As early as 9 September, the historical report quoted Hayashi as exclaiming that "the people of Tateyama are enjoying peace."<sup>48</sup> At a 10 September conference with the RCT's advanced party representatives in Chiba, Governor Saito honored Major Boland by presenting him with a seventy-one year-old family heirloom and went on to report confidently that there was "no friction" between his citizens and the newly arrived American soldiers.<sup>49</sup> Colonel Miller remembered a 25 October meeting as "quite a party in the gov's office – had drinks – everything pleasant."<sup>50</sup>

This goodwill extended beyond formal conferences. On 14 November, Baron Hayashi, the Tateyama police chief, and a local railroad official welcomed about fifty officers to a school in the city and treated their American guests to a show that included singing, dancing, juggling, acrobatics, and dancing. Slightly amused, Miller jotted in his journal: "It was interesting

although it would be a bore to see a second time.”<sup>51</sup> These reservations notwithstanding, he went to a dinner party hosted by the head of the Chikura fishing association less than a month later in the company of Hayashi, several local civilian dignitaries, and a few other U.S. officers. With his shoes off and seated on a cushion, the colonel partook of beer, sake, and fish and watched as dancing Japanese girls entertained the audience. Again, the unexcitable Miller described the experience as “interesting, but wouldn’t want to do it often.” Nonetheless, he was impressed with the efforts of his hosts and added, “The Japanese went to a lot of trouble to prepare the affair.”<sup>52</sup> Before he departed in January, Miller made a special trip by plane to Chiba in order to bid a personal farewell to Governor Saito. He made similar visits to Baron Hayashi – both formally and informally. Miller for one appreciated the high level of assistance that the civilian officials of the Chiba Prefecture delivered throughout the occupation.<sup>53</sup> Moreover, if one accepts Miller’s experience as typical among the RCT’s senior leaders, the relationships between the victors and the vanquished were surprisingly amiable.

Interaction with civilian leaders and the general populace transformed the troopers and their views of the Japanese. Combat veteran Lamar Boland, who had held the Japanese in plain disgust when he arrived at the home islands, recalled his change in attitude with some bewilderment: “It’s amazing how I was going through all that fighting, and then to have the close feeling . . . that I do right now. I really think they’re . . . great people, and I just think a lot of them.”<sup>54</sup> Lieutenant Judson Chubbuck, longtime aide to General Cunningham, echoed this sentiment as he remembered his occasional visits to Japanese schools in the prefecture. A “country boy” from Illinois, he was fascinated with the agricultural methods of the rural villagers and – in an extraordinary demonstration of Japanese hospitality – received permission to spend a few days with a local farmer and his family.<sup>55</sup> To Sergeant Allen Benton, searching the countryside for weapons storage sites constituted only a part of his mission while on patrol. GIs

also served as “goodwill ambassadors,” welcomed in villages “with parties . . . as though we were friends rather than recent deadly enemies.”<sup>56</sup> He described the good-natured feelings flowing on one such occasion: “After a fine meal of Japanese delicacies accompanied by plenty of sake, our host announced, ‘I will now sing old Japanese song,’ and proceeded to give a beautiful rendition of Schubert’s Serenade, with Japanese words. I don’t know if he was putting us on, or if he really believed it was a Japanese song. . . . Anyway, we let it pass.” As far as Benton was concerned, these were, after all, moments shared among “friendly co-workers.”<sup>57</sup>

The prevalence of Japanese cooperation facilitated the RCT’s occupation duties and thus allowed senior leaders to focus on an almost equally challenging problem – maintaining soldier morale. The consequences of Allied victory made this a formidable task. With the end of the conflict, troopers overseas for more than three years wanted nothing more than to collect their authorized Japanese war souvenirs and go home.<sup>58</sup> Many had their wish granted, and this, in turn, led to dramatic personnel turnover as veterans left and twenty-year-old replacements arrived. The effort to lessen the hardships associated with the deployment to Japan began soon after the 112th’s landing at Tateyama.

Even for a unit that had spent all of its days in the Pacific Theater sleeping under canvas in the best of circumstances, the living conditions at Tateyama were deemed unsatisfactory. Within the first week of the occupation, a construction program was initiated at the naval air station. While U.S. engineers established facilities for potable drinking water, local Japanese workers were drafted into camp clean-up crews, and technicians started to revamp the base’s electrical system. For weeks, the bulk of the RCT remained quartered in tents, but the situation improved steadily and more so as subordinate units departed Tateyama for outlying villages. Movements to Kisarazu, Mohara, and other installations were viewed favorably in part because they possessed better soldier accommodations. Fresh food began arriving in small quantities

after a month, around the same time daily ice delivery got underway. When a bakery section reported to the RCT in mid-November, the troopers had the frequent opportunity to enjoy fresh bread. As expected, meals during Thanksgiving, Christmas, and New Year's Day came with turkey and all the trimmings.

Efforts by higher headquarters and within the RCT itself combined to offer the cavalymen a wide range of activities to offset the boredom of overseas deployment. Without a doubt, organized athletics was the most common form of leisure. By 16 September, the 112th had a substantial program comprised of twenty-four teams and the facilities on which to compete, specifically three basketball courts, one football field, and fourteen softball and baseball diamonds. Once occupation duties became routine, the soldiers of the RCT apparently became avid sportsmen and ball players. Trains shuttled teams throughout the peninsula in order to participate in scheduled games with dispersed units. Troops met toward the end of November for a regimental track and field meet. In addition, the 112th managed to secure thirteen boats for recreational purposes.

Other diversions and support facilities helped to pass the time, as well. By early October, the Tateyama base had a post exchange, a Red Cross-sponsored library, and a theater that showed movies every evening. At least once, local Japanese performed a two-hour program of native singing and dancing. For troopers elsewhere, the RCT band went on tour across the Chiba Prefecture. Moreover, special events, like trips to Tokyo and an American style rodeo in Japan's capital city (presumably in conjunction with the 1st Cavalry Division stationed there), rounded out the options for legitimate and organized entertainment.<sup>59</sup>

Nevertheless, despite the efforts of senior leaders to thwart them through bolstering morale, minor discipline problems still surfaced. Chief among them was fraternization, an issue addressed in a sharp Cunningham directive dated 29 October: "The practice of Geisha girls

riding in vehicles with U.S. Army personnel will cease.”<sup>60</sup> The general criticized the commissioned ranks in particular, admonishing them to give more attention to their personal appearance and finding it necessary to issue this amusing order: “All officers attending moving picture shows in the RCT Headquarters Building will be properly dressed. Bedroom slippers, etc., will not be worn.”<sup>61</sup>

To be sure, these and other lapses in standards rankled Cunningham, who remained “Old Army” to the core throughout his years with the 112th. He saw training, like athletics and recreation, as a way to strengthen unit discipline and also as means of occupying his soldiers’ time. With these goals in mind, the general and his staff launched programs designed for both veterans and replacements. Beginning as early as 15 September, the 112th held classes in basic military subjects for troopers who were not involved in patrols. Marches, calisthenics, and close-order drill also constituted the routine events that absorbed time on the training schedule, as did ceremonies and inspections. To ensure adequate supervision of their dispersed units, senior leaders of the RCT sometimes used the 148th Field Artillery’s liaison plane to fly from part of the peninsula to another in order to carry out inspections. As the 112th considered its own demobilization, leaders organized a series of courses stressing skills that would be applicable in the civilian world. In mid-November, resident experts under the direction of Colonel Hooper and Lieutenant Chubbuck started teaching some 650 enrolled troopers a variety of subjects, including cooking, typing, automobile mechanics, and telegraph operating. Along with this relevant training, instructors offered selected academic courses. In another example of preparing GIs for life outside of the Army, the chain of command conducted literacy surveys with an eye toward initiating a mandatory program for those troopers who could not read.<sup>62</sup>

The RCT had done well to tailor its training toward non-military subjects, for these seemed quite pertinent as the weeks on Japan elapsed. In the end, the troopers were once again

beneficiaries of the remarkable cooperation of the Japanese people. In mid-September, MacArthur announced, "The smooth progress of the occupation in Japan enabled a drastic cut in the number of troops originally estimated for that purpose."<sup>63</sup> Surprising many (including his civilian superiors) with this bold statement, the Supreme Commander proposed that the anticipated force of 500,000 men be reduced to 200,000 within six months.<sup>64</sup> The 112th fell within that fortunate group slated for deactivation. Indeed, high personnel turnover had affected the RCT ever since its arrival on Japan. By the end of September, over 560 officers and men (with two longtime squadron commanders among them) had transferred to the 43d Infantry Division as it embarked for its return to the United States. To compensate for this loss, a combination of young replacements and "low-point" men from the Americal Division reported to the unit in nearly equal numbers during October and November, drastically overhauling the composition of the RCT. With December, deactivation became imminent, and unit strength steadily declined through discharges and transfers. On 1 January 1946, elements of the 1st Cavalry Division assumed control of the Chiba Prefecture and relieved the 112th of all occupation duties, allowing Hooper and Miller (Cunningham had departed in mid-December) to coordinate the turn-in of organizational records and property. They did so with the help of a handful of troopers and one hundred others temporarily attached to the dwindling unit.<sup>65</sup>

The most decisive factor affecting the performance of the 112th during its occupation of the Chiba Prefecture was the accommodating attitude of the Japanese. This surprising development allowed the unit to oversee the peaceful disarmament and demobilization of its sector, thus executing a task for which it was largely unprepared. Japanese cooperation also facilitated the RCT's rapid transition from a combat organization to an occupation force by defusing many of the negative views that U.S. soldiers had formed during their time spent fighting the emperor's troops. Once the 112th's duties on the Chiba Peninsula became routine,

the most pressing challenge that its senior leaders faced involved boredom and possible lapses of discipline within their own ranks. To help counteract the potential for harm that these issues entailed, commanders and the RCT staff organized a rather intense recreational program and offered training in skills that would be useful in civilian life.

For the remaining troopers of the 112th, their anticipated return to the life they knew before the war drew closer on 16 January 1946, when – after three-and-a-half years overseas – the dismounted cavalry unit deactivated. Sailing for Japan a few days later, Hooper returned home in early February and completed his final act of service as a member of the regiment by presenting its colors to the governor of Texas.<sup>66</sup> The long journey from Fort Clark through the jungles and mountains of the Southwest Pacific to the outskirts of Tokyo had ended.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> *Reports of General MacArthur*, vol. 1 supplement, *MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase* (1966; reprint, Washington, D.C.: Center of Military History, United States Army, 1994), 2-12. For an account of the implementation of Operation BLACKLIST in the immediate aftermath of the Japanese surrender, see James, *Years of MacArthur*, vol. 2, 778-84.

<sup>2</sup> “Historical Report (Luzon),” 1-30 June 1945, RG 407, NA. For the RCT’s activity in July and early August, see entries in the “Regimental Diary,” *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Allen H. Benton, “The Greatest Day of My Life,” n.d., author’s collection.

<sup>4</sup> Philip L. Hooper, tape recording, March 2002, author’s collection. Many troopers shared Hooper’s sense of astonishment. “Golden Gate in ‘48” was a catchphrase among the GIs, implying that it would be years before they would make it home for good. Bray, “World War II Reminiscences,” 230, USAMHI.

<sup>5</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, Training Memorandum No. 8, 26 June 1945, 1-7, RG 407, NA; quotes on p. 1. See also, “Regimental Diary,” 1 July-14 August 1945, *ibid.* Total replacements noted in “General Summary” of “Historical Report (Luzon),” *ibid.* This concern for inculcating the “spirit of the offensive” may have been one way of addressing morale problems in the 112th. The months spent overseas and in combat were undoubtedly taking a toll on GIs. See McDonnell, “Rarin’ to Go,” 45, Dunlap Collection; and Hooper to Drea, 8 November 1982, *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 15 August-2 September 1945, RG 407, NA; HQ, 112th RCT, “Narrative,” 18 August-2 September 1945, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18087, Entry 427 [hereafter “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative”], RG 407, NA.

<sup>7</sup> Bray, “World War II Reminiscences,” 241, USAMHI.

<sup>8</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, memorandum with no subject line, 21 August 1945 [hereafter “Cunningham’s Instructions”], Dunlap Collection. See also HQ, 112th RCT, Field Order No. 1, 24 August 1945, 2, *ibid.*, where Cunningham stated, “The matters of dress, military courtesy and conduct will be of extreme importance in this operation. Commanders of all echelons will impress on their troops the necessity for meticulous attention to neat and soldierly dress and appearance when in public.”

<sup>9</sup> To a certain extent, the cavalymen of the 112th were accustomed to learning fast. If thoughts of occupation duty gave soldiers any reason to doubt their ability to complete the mission, many might have looked back upon their introduction to combat to find consolation in that memory as they faced another uncertain situation. Benton, for instance, arrived as a replacement while the Luzon campaign was underway. He met his squad leader, stood guard that night, and went on patrol the next day – participating in his first firefight on an intense but all-too-typical session of “on-the-job training.” Benton tape recording, author’s collection.

<sup>10</sup> Hooper tape recording, March 2002, author’s collection.

<sup>11</sup> “Cunningham’s Instructions,” Dunlap Collection [emphasis in original]. Philip L. Hooper, telephone conversation with author, 8 March 2002, author’s collection. Holding a similar uncertainty about what to expect during the initial occupation, MacArthur’s staff “assumed that at best there would be an attitude of non-cooperation in Japan and at worst, armed resistance in many parts of the main islands,



despite such proclamations for the cessation of hostilities as would be required of the Emperor.”  
*MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase*, 4.

<sup>12</sup> “Cunningham’s Instructions,” Dunlap Collection.

<sup>13</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 2 September 1945; “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 18 August-2 September 1945; both in RG 407, NA.

<sup>14</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 3 September 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>15</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, “Occupation of the Tateyama-Wan Area by United States Forces,” 3 September 1945, 1, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, 1-2; quote on p. 3. Policymakers in Washington envisioned that the occupation would be an “indirect” one. Marlene J. Mayo, “American Wartime Planning for Occupied Japan: The Role of the Experts” in *Americans As Proconsuls: United States Military Governments in Germany and Japan, 1944-1952*, ed. Robert Wolfe (Carbondale, IL: Southern University Press, 1984), 47. For a description of Military Government units and their functions, see *MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase*, 198-201.

<sup>17</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, “Occupation of the Tateyama-Wan Area,” 2-3, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>18</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 3 September 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>19</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, Field Order No. 1, 24 August 1945, 2, Dunlap Collection. “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 3 September 1945, RG 407, NA; Waite Journal, 48, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>20</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 3, 8 September 1945, RG 407, NA; Boland interview, 36-37, USAMHI; *MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase*, 28; Copy of a photograph in the Dunlap Collection, showing the 1st Squadron, 112th Cavalry, landing at Tateyama.

<sup>21</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 5 September 1945; “Regimental Diary,” 15-30 September 1945; both in RG 407, NA.

<sup>22</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 20 November 1945, 5 January 1946, RG 407, NA.

<sup>23</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 9 September 1945, RG 407, NA. The number of patrols that each troop dispatched per day depended on its assigned area. For example, 2d Squadron began by sending out no more than one patrol per troop but eventually adopted a system whereby five four-man patrols each covered a designated area of about one half of a square mile. See September and October 1945 entries in HQ, 2d Squadron, 112th Cavalry, Journal (28 January-12 November 1945), Dunlap Collection.

<sup>24</sup> See for example, “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 6-7, 15 September 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>25</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 4, 24 September 1945, RG 407, NA. See also, *MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase*, 136-38.

<sup>26</sup> See “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 4 September 1945, RG 407, NA; and Boland interview, 31-37, USAMHI.

<sup>27</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 27 September 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid., 9 October 1945.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid., 4 October 1945.

<sup>30</sup> See various entries throughout September and October 1945 in “Regimental Diary” and “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative”; both in RG 407, NA.

<sup>31</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 29 September 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid., 17 October 1945.

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., 22 November 1945; “Regimental Diary,” 10 October 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>34</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 15 September, 22 October, and 11, 26 November 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 2 November 1945.

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., 20-21 September 1945; Waite Journal, 48, Dunlap Collection; *MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase*, 140; “Japanese Blast Kills 01,” 21 September 1945, *New York Times*; Hooper tape recording, March 2002, author’s collection.

<sup>37</sup> See various entries in “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 21 September- 26 December 1945, RG 407, NA. For tonnage remaining in Chiba Prefecture at the time of the 112th’s departure, see HQ, 112th RCT, “Final Report on Status of Demobilization,” 31 December 1945, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18087, Entry 427, RG 407, NA. For total ammunition destroyed by occupation forces, see *MacArthur in Japan: The Occupation: Military Phase*, 142.

<sup>38</sup> David P. Calaveri, “‘Stay the Course’: Nine Planning Themes for Stability and Reconstruction Operations,” *Military Review* 85 (July-August 2005): 35, 38n; Mayo, “American Wartime Planning,” 45-49. To be sure, GIs throughout the occupation force generally behaved – on their own account – respectfully toward the local population. This certainly helped relations, but it seems to be much less of a decisive factor than the almost universal compliance of the Japanese in the Chiba Prefecture in determining why the 112th was able to accomplish its mission. The American approach at the strategic level may have encouraged cooperative behavior on the part of Japanese leaders, but it is difficult to overstate the impact of the choice local officials made to comply unreservedly with SCAP policy in the early stages of the occupation. Taking a different view, Calaveri gives more of the credit to American GIs and SCAP’s effort to train them.

<sup>39</sup> HQ, 112th Cavalry, S-2 Annex, 16-17 December 1943, RG 407, NA; Boland interview, 12-13, USAMHI; Chubbuck interview, 25, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>40</sup> For examples, see “Regimental Diary,” 4-5 March 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid., 28 July, 3 August 1945 (quote from latter entry); HQ, 112th RCT, S-2 Periodic Report No. 14 (12-13 February 1945) and No. 15 (13-14 February 1945), Part Two, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18084, Entry 427; both in RG 407, NA.

<sup>42</sup> Boland interview, 20, USAMHI.

<sup>43</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 4 September 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid., 18 September 1945.

<sup>45</sup> Ibid., quotes in 12 October and 3-7 November 1945 entries respectively. D. Clayton James explains the reasons for this remarkable cooperation of the Japanese people: “Undoubtedly important were the thoroughness and unexpectedness of their defeat in the war, which threw the Japanese off balance and made them more susceptible to new influences in a situation for which they were unprepared.” D. Clayton James, *The Years of MacArthur*, vol. 3, *Triumph and Disaster, 1945-1964* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1985), 7.

Historian and former ambassador to Japan, Edward O. Reischauer offered other reasons, such as “their situational ethics, which permitted a sharp about-face; their respect for power and authority of any sort; the fact that they were fighting the war primarily out of a sense of duty and not because of personal hatred or fear; the underlying friendship and admiration in Japan for the United States . . .; the realism of the Japanese, which made them recognize that cooperation was the only practical course; and their admirable willingness to accept new knowledge and admit past errors.” Quoted in James, *Triumph and Disaster*, 7-8.

See also John W. Dower, *War Without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1986), 301-11, where the author explains “the abrupt transition from a merciless racist war to an amicable postwar relationship” by arguing that “the same stereotypes that fed superpatriotism and outright race hate were adaptable to cooperation.” Quote on p. 302. Dower provides a more comprehensive analysis of Japanese attitudes following the end of the war in *Embracing Defeat: Japan in the Wake of World War II* (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, 1999).

<sup>46</sup> “112th RCT BLACKLIST Narrative,” 11-12, 17 November 1945, 3, 18 December 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>47</sup> Ibid., 21 September 1945.

<sup>48</sup> Ibid., 9 September 1945.

<sup>49</sup> Ibid., 10 September 1945. Boland interview, 32, USAMHI.

<sup>50</sup> Miller Journal, 25 October 1945, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>51</sup> Ibid., 14 November 1945.

<sup>52</sup> Ibid.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid., 4, 8 January 1946.

<sup>54</sup> Boland interview, 38, USAMHI.

<sup>55</sup> Judson Chubbuck, telephone conversation with author, 25 February 2002, author’s collection.

<sup>56</sup> Benton, “Greatest Day,” author’s collection. See also, Benton tape recording, *ibid.*

<sup>57</sup> Benton, “Greatest Day,” author’s collection. In a telling comparison, one trooper who served with the regiment from Fort Clark to Japan recalled, “The Japanese treated us nicer than the people of Louisiana during our 1941 maneuver.” Claude R. Rigsby, typed comment at the bottom of a copy of “Cunningham’s Instructions,” Dunlap Collection.

<sup>58</sup> Troopers on occupation duty in Japan were allowed to bring one souvenir home (either a sword, saber, rifle, or pair of binoculars). The practice of collecting war trophies had to be regulated since

many men attempted to ship multiple small arms souvenirs stateside. See HQ, 112th RCT, Bulletin No. 87, 29 October 1945, S-1 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18087, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>59</sup> See various entries in "Regimental Diary," 3 October-5 December 1945; and "112th BLACKLIST Narrative," 5 September-19 November 1945; both in RG 407, NA.

<sup>60</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, Bulletin No. 87, 29 October 1945, RG 407, NA.

<sup>61</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, Bulletin No. 86, 27 October 1945, S-1 Annex, Historical Report, CAVR-112-0.3, Box 18087, Entry 427, RG 407, NA.

<sup>62</sup> See various entries in "Regimental Diary," 15 September-15 December 1945; and "112th BLACKLIST Narrative," 15 September-15 December 1945; both in RG 407, NA. See also, Hooper tape recording, March 2002, author's collection.

<sup>63</sup> Quoted in James, *Triumph and Disaster*, 18.

<sup>64</sup> *Ibid.*, 18-19.

<sup>65</sup> See "Regimental Diary," 24 October 1945; and various entries in "112th BLACKLIST Narrative," 22 September 1945-16 January 1946; both in RG 407, NA. For the transfer of the 112th's two veteran squadron commanders, see McMains interview, 132-33, Dunlap Collection.

<sup>66</sup> Hooper was the last of the original Texas Guardsmen assigned to the regiment when it departed for the South Pacific in July 1942. General HQ, U.S. Army Forces, Pacific, Public Relations Office, "Press Release: 112th RCT Inactivated," 9 January 1946, Dunlap Collection.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONCLUSION

Facing an array of challenges as it made its way across the battlefields of SWPA, the 112th Cavalry Regiment demonstrated its capacity to learn but did so with mixed success. During its campaigns, the unit acquired new knowledge about the setting in which it operated and the enemy it confronted there. Obtaining this knowledge firsthand or in the form of guidance from Sixth Army, leaders interpreted it in light of their previous experiences and adjusted their tactical methods and techniques to deal more effectively with the problems at hand. Finally, they distributed this knowledge throughout the organization, allowing other members of the 112th to benefit from what only a few had discovered. The learning process that led to improved performance generally encompassed these three steps.<sup>1</sup> To leave it at that though, ascribes a monolithic quality to the regiment that simply did not exist. In reality, learning occurred inconsistently across the organization. Sometimes, the process affected nearly the entire outfit, with a number of subordinate units altering their collective behavior to attain greater proficiency in a particular task. On other occasions, the results were less widespread (or not apparent at all) as only portions of the regiment acquired and interpreted new knowledge, applied it themselves in combat, but then were unsuccessful in their efforts to distribute that knowledge. What factors enhanced the unit's ability to learn, and, when certain elements failed to learn, what accounted for that failure?

Without a doubt, the 112th benefited from its gradual exposure to the operating environment, learning incrementally as it acquired new knowledge about how best to contend with the harsh climate and terrain, as well as the enemy. Following the regiment's "warm-up" period on New Caledonia, the assignment on Woodlark presented the cavalrymen with a grand

opportunity to gain valuable experience at very little cost.<sup>2</sup> They familiarized themselves with the new tropical surroundings and sorted out the challenges associated with the shift from a mounted to a dismounted unit. The 112th worked through the implications of these new conditions apart from the dangers of the combat zone and generally profited from the chance (and the time) to do so. However, the outfit could only interpret the knowledge it acquired and, in this respect, operating in a garrison-type atmosphere had its shortcomings. The experience of fighting a determined enemy for the first time at Arawe taught the troopers lessons they could not have possibly learned on Woodlark. The Japanese threat spurred adaptation to previously unconsidered problems and led to the development of innovative techniques for perimeter defense and the rapid concentration of firepower.<sup>3</sup>

The crucible of the Driniumor further emphasized the advantages of incremental learning as the 112th applied the expertise it had gained in past campaigns to a more challenging situation. On New Guinea, the regiment did not have the luxury of waiting for reinforcements as it had at Arawe. Instead, it fought off the Japanese from hasty positions by refining defensive techniques learned earlier and by leaning heavily on well-coordinated artillery and mortar support. Dire circumstances yielded a dose of courage to the troopers as they clung to jungled terrain that guarded a vital drop zone. The same probably coaxed leaders into carrying out limited but successful combined-arms assaults on an enemy that lacked the protection of dug-in emplacements. One officer who served with the regiment for the entire war reflected on how fortunate the unit was to have entered combat the way it did: “One of the biggest things that worked for us was that . . . we weren’t just dumped off. . . . We went into it gradually. We understood the territory, the jungle area; we understood how to operate in there. . . . We had a lot of experience with it, and I think we were lucky in being able to do that.”<sup>4</sup> Implicit in this retrospective observation is the assertion that, had the troopers been thrust into the situation in

New Guinea without first passing the critical milestones of Woodlark and Arawe, they might have courted disaster on the Driniumor. As it stood, the outfit headed into its final campaigns with a set of skills that served it well. Among these were perimeter defense, patrolling, and the coordination of artillery support.

The 112th's gradual introduction to the ordeal of combat did not generate success in all of its battlefield trials, however. In his discussion on forms of learning, scholar Brian A. Jackson notes that the manner in which organizations learn depends very much on their environment. "Different groups need to learn in different ways at different times," he argues. "When conditions are relatively stable, a group may need only to make small changes to the activities it already carries out."<sup>5</sup> The Driniumor campaign tested the regiment more than any of its prior experiences had. Yet the months spent manning prepared positions on Woodlark and later fighting from similar defenses at Arawe enabled the troopers to make the transition to the extraordinarily intense operations on New Guinea more easily. Jackson refers to this form of learning as "continuous improvement." It stands in stark contrast to "discontinuous change," which "aims at a radical departure from what the group is already doing."<sup>6</sup> Such change requires a more deliberate approach to the learning process. This notion helps explain the 112th's marginal performance when it came to assaulting Japanese strongpoints.

Nothing in its past experience adequately prepared the unit for the task of attacking the kind of defenses it found at Arawe. Hardly any time had been devoted to troop and squadron-level maneuvers, particularly under live-fire conditions and with artillery support. In their recurring efforts to eliminate the enemy position to their front, senior leaders experimented with deception, surprise, and varying applications of firepower but chose to limit the size of the assault force in every case to a reinforced troop or below. General Cunningham was anxious about the possibility of wasting lives in a large-scale attack against a strongpoint of unknown

strength and wanted to avoid placing the beachhead itself in jeopardy should such an operation meet with disaster.<sup>7</sup> Wisdom may have been the better part of valor in this instance. However, one cannot help but conclude that the lack of realistic training at platoon, troop, and squadron level had much to do with the 112th's repeated failures.

While the effects of this shortcoming were obviously revealed in combat on Arawe, they unfortunately carried over into the learning process as well and hampered the regiment's ability to improve in the area where it needed it most. In taking on a well-prepared Japanese position, the 112th admittedly faced a steep learning curve. This served as an obstacle to the unit's interpretation of the knowledge it had acquired and kept the sophistication of the lessons learned at a low level. For example, many observations addressed weapons employment and individual fieldcraft while relatively few centered on squad or platoon tactics. The after-action report described the tough enemy defenses encountered, but it did not explore the confounding problem of how to successfully attack them. Consequently, much of the training following major combat on Arawe took place at the rifle and machine gun range.<sup>8</sup> For a unit just learning to appreciate the value of weapons proficiency, this emphasis may have been appropriate. It did little to improve the regiment's ability to overrun fortified positions.

Learning in the aftermath of the Leyte operation struck a similar chord. The most intelligible lessons addressed issues at squad level, with many reflecting concerns about personal comfort and equipment that the unforgiving weather and topography had brought to light. Compared with this catalogue of practical advice for the soldier on patrol or in the foxhole, observations dealing with complicated collective skills were fewer in number and less illuminating. In the report summarizing lessons learned, the regiment's numerous attempts to capture two strongpoints went conspicuously unmentioned. It was as if the rich fiber of lessons woven into the fabric of those experiences remained knotted and indecipherable. The document



included a diagram of one enemy position that hinted at its near impregnability, but no comments reflected on the important question of how best to employ a squadron or troop in the attack.<sup>9</sup>

The actual conduct of the 112th's major attacks on Leyte suggested that the regiment had learned little about the task since Arawe. Indeed, senior leaders fought the engagements in much the same manner as on New Britain. After running into resistance, squadrons put pressure on the enemy through frontal assaults and artillery bombardments while attempting – with much difficulty – to locate the position's flank or rear. The efforts failed in several instances but not for a lack of trying. In the end, commanders adhered to a cautious approach that committed one or two troops to the fight, relied perhaps too much on indirect fire support, and still did not solve the central problem of attacking Japanese prepared defenses: closing with the enemy in order to pinpoint individual bunkers so that they could be destroyed by accurately delivered fires. To be sure, progress in less complicated tasks – like patrolling – had come incrementally at squad and platoon level. At higher echelons though, neither training nor combat had worked to appreciably improve the 112th's *modus operandi* in the attack.

The concept of discontinuous change suggests that the regiment may have needed something more than experience to better its performance in assaulting prepared positions. Edward J. Drea, a noted historian of the Pacific War, argues that institutional reasons help account for why American units had trouble with strongpoints once firepower proved unable to dislodge the enemy. In the interwar years, the U.S. Army focused its collective training on honing the infantry-artillery team. Additionally, changes in force structure reduced the number of riflemen in a regiment while increasing the amount of crew-served weapons (and thus bolstering unit firepower). Drea concludes that the Army had a “doctrine problem” in SWPA. “It trained men for open, mobile warfare emphasizing machines and then had to consign them to

primeval jungle swamps to root out stubborn defenders in a manner more reminiscent of tenth- rather than twentieth-century warfare.”<sup>10</sup> Outfits fighting in the European Theater ran into similar problems. In his study of a U.S. infantry division that fought in Italy, John S. Brown suggests that all units had difficulty at first with “putting line-breaking routines together” and places most of the blame on a formal pre-combat training program that emphasized mobile warfare.<sup>11</sup>

Attacking prepared positions impervious to concentrated firepower called for the 112th to make something more than a small shift in its normal activity. Although it did not demand the creation of new tactical doctrine, successful completion of the task involved a deviation from prior doctrinal conditioning. As Jackson asserts, such discontinuous change is “usually pursued intentionally and requires a more complex learning process than continuous efforts do.”<sup>12</sup> Learning occurred in the 112th, but it took place incrementally and not on the scale or at the level necessary to improve substantially in the area of assaulting Japanese strongpoints.

One of the factors explaining why the outfit failed to make a deliberate attempt to fix this problem entailed the 112th’s status as a separate regiment. As such, it fell under the immediate control of Sixth Army. The unit was attached to corps or divisions for portions of the its campaigns on New Guinea and the Philippines, but even then it never trained under the supervision of these elements or directly tapped into their lesson-learning processes. Peter R. Mansoor would find this significant, as well as unfortunate. In *The GI Offensive in Europe*, he argues that the U.S. Army in World War II instituted new tactics, techniques, and procedures principally at the division level. Corps and army commanders were too far removed from combat to play a meaningful role in this process. Likewise, since they had to devote much of their attention to the current fight, regimental commanders were hard pressed to develop and implement consequential, widespread changes. With the appropriate focus, staff manning, and

organizational clout to husband training time and resources, the division was the key echelon for codifying, refining, and disseminating innovative procedures to overcome unforeseen obstacles.<sup>13</sup> With respect to SWPA, one can make a similar argument. The 1st Cavalry, for example, enjoyed widely recognized success, having fought and trained as a division in theater.<sup>14</sup> Lacking division-level oversight to shepherd it through the learning process, the 112th seems to have suffered by comparison.<sup>15</sup>

Mansoor's assertion notwithstanding, the Sixth Army commander tried to institute new procedures to address a theater-wide issue, but the impact of his efforts seems to have been minimal. Krueger's proposed answer to the problem of attacking enemy fortifications involved the creation of a permanent platoon-sized organization, the assault party, within each battalion and squadron. A June 1944 training directive outlined the structure and equipment of the new formation, as well as a basic conception of how units would employ it to close with and destroy stubborn Japanese positions.<sup>16</sup> After pulling off of the Driniumor line, the 112th faithfully complied with the instructions by establishing assault parties and then practicing their principal task a few times before the next campaign. This focused collective training was inadequate in both frequency and rigor, and Sixth Army performed no external check to ensure otherwise. Not surprisingly, the 112th rarely – if ever – used its squadron assault parties for the purpose that Krueger intended. According to the general's own ruthless critique of his army's actions halfway through the Leyte operation, the same held true for other units.<sup>17</sup> Indeed, combat on Leyte suggested something about the futility of instituting organizational change through memorandum alone.

Once acquired from higher headquarters, knowledge pertaining to the reduction of Japanese strongpoints was difficult to interpret and distribute given the limited time available, the assortment of other demands imposed upon the 112th's leaders, and the complexity of the

task itself. The proposed change that Krueger introduced entailed a considerable shift for units reliant largely on firepower to destroy the enemy. The idea of discontinuous learning suggests that adopting such a change would have required a serious investment in training on the part of Sixth Army and its subordinate commands. Making such an investment – even if it was considered – would have been wishful thinking. What essentially happened then is that Krueger provided explicit knowledge in the form of a written directive on how best to eliminate enemy fortifications but offered no opportunity to share tacit knowledge related to the task (if it even existed in Sixth Army). Without both types, prospects of implementing a new tactic were dim.<sup>18</sup>

Serving overseas for eighteen months and fighting in three campaigns during that time, the 112th had accumulated a substantial amount of experience prior to its final test in combat on Luzon. Operations on New Britain, New Guinea, and Leyte had transformed the regiment from an unseasoned National Guard unit into a battle-hardened military organization while exposing its troopers to a host of conditions. As they encountered changing enemy tactics, different physical environments, and a variety of missions, the cavalrymen tried to adapt in order to accomplish their assigned tasks as well as increase their chances of survival. Often, these efforts were successful. Sometimes, they were not. In any case, the experience gained in the 112th's previous campaigns affected how the unit learned on Luzon. It provided the context that allowed leaders to reflect on the strengths and weaknesses of their outfit and established the basis for deciding where to invest attention and precious time as the regiment prepared for the future. Experience also served as a springboard for further adaptation. Its effect was not uniformly positive, though. On occasion, what the troopers had seen and done in past operations formed biases that worked to hinder the learning process.

The defense of Hot Corner demonstrated the ability of the 112th to build upon its prior experience while adopting slightly different methods to meet unfamiliar challenges. Dug in near

a key road intersection northeast of Manila, Troop C fought off repeated Japanese attacks through the effective application of indirect fire support and the cavalrymen's own expertise in the area of perimeter defense. Success was no accident. Techniques that maximized the destructiveness of artillery bombardments and skills that enabled GIs to employ captured enemy weapons had been developed and refined over the course of several campaigns. Leaders initially struggled with the problem of surprisingly intense Japanese artillery fire, and their efforts to mitigate the unusual threat showed the extent to which learning in the midst of combat relied on previous experience. The troop commander at Hot Corner acquired new knowledge, observing that the shelling of his position stopped whenever the 112th's liaison plane flew overhead in search of enemy guns. He interpreted this knowledge in the context of the practices the unit had developed over time. Thus, the regiment's routine employment of the Piper Cub in several unconventional roles prompted the captain to propose that it perform yet another one – in this case, air cover. Senior leaders not only accepted his request but weeks later, dispatched the liaison plane in support of another subordinate unit for the same purpose.

The episode at Hot Corner also suggested something about the unevenness of the learning process as it took place across different parts of the organization. Nothing guaranteed that what one element learned could be transferred to another simply in passing. Indeed, hard-earned lessons shared among units stood a chance of quick dismissal depending on the recipient's biases. The commander of the troop that came to relieve Hot Corner's defenders had no exposure to the kind of bombardments the outpost had recently experienced. Indeed, past campaigns had probably given him little cause for concern along those lines. He positioned his men to defend against the familiar threat of a night attack while neglecting the danger posed by enemy artillery, and his unit paid a price for it. Likewise, he made no attempt to use the Piper Cub to lessen the severity or frequency of the shelling. His omission here was really no surprise

given the nature of the new technique. It involved an unusual problem and an unconventional solution. The exchange of such anomalous information – not to mention the conceptual leap required to make sense of it – could not happen during a hurried meeting on the battlefield. To incorporate relatively complicated knowledge into the learning process and counter the biases ingrained through prior experience demanded a more deliberate or formal manner of distribution. It was different at the lower levels of the organization, where simpler knowledge could be transferred through informal methods.

Patrolling operations west of Ipo Dam illustrated the 112th's continued reliance on incremental learning as a means of improving performance. The regiment had carried out this type of duty before, and the time spent probing the Shimbu Line afforded the cavalrymen ample opportunity to build upon experience and refine this set of skills. Months on Luzon gave rise to more sophisticated and innovative uses of familiar tools, like the Piper Cub and field artillery, in support of patrols. The organization also showed progress in its ability to plan and coordinate multiple reconnaissance and combat missions on a daily basis. Most significantly, the 112th broke from established convention and began conducting patrols in hours of darkness. The failure of repeated attempts to infiltrate the screen of Japanese outposts had driven commanders to reconsider the relative utility of night operations. It helped that there was time to reflect on the problem and then test possible solutions with minimal risk. For their part, junior leaders and their men adapted without much difficulty, adding to their already sharpened patrolling skills an understanding of how to operate in hours of darkness. Moreover, the recurring mission facilitated the gradual distribution of this new knowledge as increasing numbers of night patrol veterans passed lessons on to their comrades.

Performance in the area of patrolling, where the regiment progressed on the basis of experience and steadily improved over the course of several weeks, diverged noticeably from the

outfit's conduct in the immediate aftermath of its reconnaissance-in-force up the Metropolitan Road. Military units that exhibit a capacity for learning seem to presuppose their ability to adapt to new conditions. Yet the case of the 112th gives some indication of the danger in assuming that such organizations will do so consistently in all circumstances, especially when the time to interpret and distribute new knowledge is limited. Neither previous operations nor training had adequately prepared 1st Squadron for a hasty withdrawal under enemy pressure. Consequently, this formidable task was handled ineptly to say the least, even under the command of seasoned officers.

The 112th's ambivalent perception of the enemy and its response to the erosion of Japanese resistance on Luzon highlighted the growing complexity of the environment in SWPA. Prior operations had given the unit a keen awareness of the strengths and weaknesses of its adversary, and this refined understanding influenced the outfit's actions in combat. The situation grew more complicated in the last months of the campaign, however. These brought with them a number of tensions about how the cavalrymen viewed Japanese soldiers, as well as the continuing struggle against them. For one, Sixth Army's stepped-up "psywar" effort placed a premium on capturing prisoners, a practice that had never received much emphasis before.<sup>19</sup> Casting doubt on the wisdom of this policy were fresh examples of Japanese trickery and brutality, which likely confirmed GI stereotypes of an enemy that refused to surrender. Even so, surrenders occurred several times, and troopers adapted to this new development. In a related matter, the opponent's near collapse on Luzon stood a bit at odds with the realization that the war was not yet over. Faced with the prospect of invading the home islands, leaders took cold comfort in balancing the notion of the conflict's coming end with evidence that – like the enemy – the 112th itself had deteriorated in some respects. The process of learning involved making sense of these tensions and attempting to resolve them.

The challenges of learning did not cease with the conclusion of the war. Policymakers in Washington may have been planning for the occupation of Japan since 1942, but their efforts did little to mitigate anxiety at the tactical level. In September 1945, the cavalrymen assumed control of a sector just across the bay from Tokyo, unsure of what awaited them there and without any specific training on the tasks they were to perform. Directives from SCAP established the ground rules, making clear the central role of the Japanese government in effecting demobilization and maintaining law and order. It remained for leaders in the regiment, though, to oversee the daily business of the occupation. Even in this unfamiliar mission, troopers could draw on past experience since, initially, their principal duty involved patrolling to check on the progress of disarmament. Likewise, dealing with civilians on Luzon had, to some degree, prepared senior leaders for their unforeseen partnership with local civilian officials in Japan. Indeed, the cooperation of these former enemies made the abrupt shift from war to peace far easier, creating conditions that enabled the 112th to learn incrementally in an environment characterized by uncertainty but not danger. In this setting, the most prominent instance of adaptation occurred in the minds of GIs who had long regarded the Japanese with repugnance and hatred. Many instead came to view the people they met through a lens colored by something akin to pity, appreciation, and even respect.

While learning in a complex environment does not happen by chance, neither do military units in combat learn according to a prescribed or uniform pattern. Given the 112th Cavalry's wartime experience, it is clear that learning occurs differently across the multiple levels of an organization and even varies among separate parts of the same level. Likewise, failure to learn in one area does not, as a matter of course, undermine advancement in all. A more important lesson, perhaps, lies in recognizing the risk of believing that learning organizations can adapt quickly to every situation that confronts them. Much depends on the role of experience, the



intricacy of the knowledge involved, and the presence of other conditions that facilitate or disrupt the learning process. Leaders must appreciate how these factors affect the way in which their units acquire, interpret, and distribute new knowledge. Along these lines, an examination of the 112th's performance in World War II offers relevant lessons for contemporary military organizations.

Increasing the comprehension of how units learn plays a central part, for instance, in the U.S. Army's efforts to prepare leaders and soldiers for the complex security environment of the twenty-first century. In its ongoing intellectual and cultural transformation, the Army seeks to develop leaders grounded in a set of core values and capable of "leading change" in ambiguous and unpredictable situations. In describing the imperative for a culture of innovation, Army documents hint at the inadequacy of deliberate, incremental learning in a fast-paced, ever-changing world and stress the pursuit of radical solutions.<sup>20</sup> At the same time, the institution clings to the methodology it dismisses as antiquated. Senior leaders hope to exploit lessons learned in combat, along with the accumulated expertise of veterans – in their role as trainers – in order to build on recent experience and thus improve the capabilities of the current and future force.<sup>21</sup> The latter process is one that the GIs of the 112th would have clearly recognized.

While the two approaches have merit, the promotion of both simultaneously suggests the need for clarification. "Do we completely understand how the Army learns in this dynamic and frequently uncertain operational environment?"<sup>22</sup> As he took charge of the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command in October 2005, General William S. Wallace posed this question. He provided an answer just by asking. As they transform, institutions must do so with an appreciation for the nuances of learning, maintaining an awareness of the complex conditions that influence the process as it occurs within units.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> This framework for understanding learning organizations is explained in Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 9-16.

<sup>2</sup> In his study of American draftee divisions during World War II, John S. Brown makes a similar point, highlighting “the importance of a gradual initiation to combat – of a ‘warm-up.’” Brown found that “divisions with both a retraining period overseas and a tour in a quiet sector seem to have done the best of any during their first major battles.” Brown, *Draftee Division*, 154.

<sup>3</sup> Among the innovations were: erecting a twenty-foot-tall chicken-wire fence in front of certain positions to stop enemy grenades; massing a troop’s grenade launchers on key enemy targets; and developing techniques to facilitate responsive and accurate 60-mm mortar fire. See “Historical Report (Arawe),” 16-19, RG 407, NA.

<sup>4</sup> Boland interview, 27-28, USAMHI.

<sup>5</sup> Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 15.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 15-16.

<sup>7</sup> The size of the enemy force facing the regiment at any one time did not exceed two to three hundred men. The 112th finally overran the Japanese position with the help of a reinforcing infantry battalion and a company of light tanks. “Regimental Diary,” 1-16 January 1944, RG 407, NA; “Historical Report (Arawe),” 17, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> “Regimental Diary,” 13 March-30 April 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>9</sup> HQ, 112th RCT, “Lessons Learned in Combat, Leyte,” 1-4, RG 407, NA. See also Annex 2 (“Diagrams of Enemy Fortifications”) and Annex 3 (“Individual Viewpoints”) of this report.

<sup>10</sup> Drea, *In the Service of the Emperor*, 62-63. Quote on p. 67.

<sup>11</sup> Brown, *Draftee Division*, 156. Brown labels rupturing defensive lines as “the most challenging of military operations.”

<sup>12</sup> Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 16. The idea of discontinuous change also suggests that attempts to break away from established biases demand a similar level of purposeful energy in the learning process.

<sup>13</sup> Mansoor, *GI Offensive in Europe*, 129, 159, 256.

<sup>14</sup> See HQ, 1st Cavalry Division, “Historical Report of the 1st Cavalry Division, K-2 Operation,” 5-8, CARL. The 1st Cavalry trained as a division in Australia prior to fighting on the Admiralty Islands. It trained for several months there before moving on to the Leyte and Luzon campaigns. Given Mansoor’s argument, it would be revealing perhaps to examine the lesson-learning processes, training programs, and future combat performance of the units that fought in the 1944 New Guinea campaign. Sixth Army’s basic unit of employment in that fast-paced campaign was generally the RCT, which meant that many divisions were split up and may have missed the opportunity to train and fight together. For an insightful analysis of that series of operations, see Taaffe, *MacArthur’s Jungle War*.

<sup>15</sup> The regiment's "Aitape interlude" is a case in point. When it returned from the Driniumor River to a base area on the New Guinea coast, the 112th drafted an ambitious six-week training plan. What actually transpired was not nearly as productive as leaders envisioned. Shortly after it began the program, the unit received an order to conduct security patrols and guard duty in the jungle for eighteen days. The regiment finished this tasking in time for a week of amphibious warfare training at the behest of Sixth Army and later complied with the requirements of a TO&E change that entailed the creation of a weapons troop in each squadron. It departed for Leyte on the heels of this dizzying reorganization having followed the path of least resistance when it came to training. Individual basic skills, weapons familiarization, and subjects suitable for classroom instruction were addressed. Complex tasks, like attacking strongpoints, were not. The two weeks between the end of the Leyte campaign and arranging for the move to Luzon, of course, left little time to correct any training shortfalls.

<sup>16</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, Training Memorandum No. 18, 22 June 1944, RG 407, NA. The Sixth Army staff also found time to publish "Combat Notes," a compilation of lessons learned drawn from the experience of several units across SWPA. Sixth Army issued a total of ten volumes throughout the war. The second, appearing in July 1944, addressed the problem of attacking Japanese fortifications. HQ, Sixth Army, "Combat Notes," vol. 2, 15 July 1944, RG 407, NA.

<sup>17</sup> HQ, Sixth Army, "Mistakes Made and Lessons Learned in the K-2 Operation," 4, 6, Krueger Papers.

<sup>18</sup> Jackson, *Aptitude for Destruction*, vol. 1, 40, 47. Incorporating new techniques or technology usually requires the acquisition of explicit *and* tacit knowledge.

<sup>19</sup> For an analysis of the "psywar" campaign in SWPA, see Allison B. Gilmore, *You Can't Fight Tanks With Bayonets: Psychological Warfare Against the Japanese Army in the Southwest Pacific* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1998).

<sup>20</sup> The U.S. Army's view of learning as it pertains to meeting the challenges of the post-9/11 security environment can be found in HQ, Department of the Army, FM 1, *The Army* (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 14 June 2005), 1-20, 3-6-8, 4-3, 4-10-11; and Francis J. Harvey and Peter J. Schoomaker, *A Statement on the Posture of the U.S. Army, 2006* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, 10 February 2006), ii, iv, 1, 3, 13-15. In its critique of incremental learning, the *2005 Army Posture Statement* (though outdated) is even more explicit: "During times of peace, change is generally slow and deliberate. . . . In wartime, however, change must occur faster; a measured approach to change will not work." Francis J. Harvey and Peter J. Schoomaker, *A Statement on the Posture of the U.S. Army, 2005* (Washington, D.C.: Office of the Chief of Staff, United States Army, 6 February 2005), 2.

<sup>21</sup> David H. Petraeus, "Learning Counterinsurgency: Observations from Soldiering in Iraq," *Military Review* 86 (January-February 2006): 2. When he published this article, Lieutenant General Petraeus was serving as the commanding general of the U.S. Army's Combined Arms Center, the parent organization of the Center for Army Lessons Learned.

<sup>22</sup> William S. Wallace, remarks made at the U.S. Army Training and Doctrine Command Assumption-of-Command Ceremony, Fort Monroe, VA, 13 October 2005 [article on-line]; available from <http://www.tradoc.army.mil/AOC.htm>.

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