

CHAPTER VI

On the extreme tip of the long tail, of the kite that is Mindanao, lies the fabled city of Zamboanga long known as one of the most beautiful spots in the Philippines. Old Fort Pilar, constructed here by the Spanish in the early seventeenth century, has seen arms of many nations come and go - raiding Chinese pirates; the Dutch and Portuguese seeking land for the Crown; the brief threat of the English; and always, recurrently, the Spanish until the American intervention of the late eighteen-hundreds.

Around the turn of the last century the comparatively large American occupation forces in the Islands established their Pettit Barracks here, which embraced old Fort Pilar. This Post, in succeeding years, knew various outstanding commanders, among them Generals Leonard Wood and John J. Pershing.

The need for a strong garrison in this part of the Archipelago having steadily decreased, for some years past only a limited number of Philippine Scout troops had been assigned here. As war clouds darkened over the Pacific in late 1941 only two companies of Scouts, plus small detachments of medical and quartermaster personnel at Pettit Barracks, and a handful of Constabulary troops held this outpost of empire.

Under the direction of Lt. Colonel William F. Dalton, Sector

MAP #5 ZAMBOANGA SECTOR

Commander, an intensive program of training for officers and men had been conducted throughout the summer. No increase in troop strength for the Zamboanga sector was authorized until December, although beginning in September units were mobilized, trained and shipped out to other points.* In August, however, a sufficient number of Garand rifles was received to arm the two companies of Scouts, whose discarded Springfields subsequently partly armed the battalion which was the mainstay of the defense of this area later.

One of the missions of the force here - as elsewhere - being to defend and expand airfields, attention was early concentrated on Wolfe Field, the only airfield in the vicinity at this time. It was considered inadequate for the traffic which was expected and plans went forward rapidly for the construction of a new, 7000-foot field in the San Roque area. This section was mostly rice paddy and consequently under water, the crop at this time being within three weeks of harvest.

Preliminary surveys were made; warehouses, machine sheds and other necessary construction gotten under way promptly under the capable direction of Major Magnusson,** area engineer; Captain R. D. Winne and Senor Nacnac, a Filipino engineer; all ably aided by several civilian foremen.***

* These units included elements of the 101st, 102nd and 103rd Infantry Regiments.

** Relieved, on or about 5 December, by Major George M. Roper.

*** J. P. Mankin, Hans Batchold and Wilfred Broad.

By 1 December the ground had been drained sufficiently for the bulldozers to begin the excavation of drainage ditches. It was then discovered that due to the spongy consistency of the ground it would be impossible to use the machines for grading. This work, all accomplished by hand labor in two shifts working from dawn to dark, made rapid progress and the last of December saw one landing strip of crushed coral rock completed and a second well under way. Christmas, followed immediately by a Moro holiday which was observed with unanimity and abandon by the laborers, disrupted the work.

Toward midnight of December 24 - 25, a number of Jap warships, conveying transports, dropped anchor off nearby Jolo Island, unnoticed by the holiday-minded townspeople. The Christian population of the town were gathered for the customary midnight Mass when enemy shells crashed without warning into the church.

At daylight the ships' air cover went into action, bombing and strafing the town and surrounding country without opposition. Naval guns firing covering barrages over the landing boats at Jolo and barrio Taglibi, some 10 kilometers down the coast, continued their destruction, reducing the palm-thatched nipa houses of the Sulus to rubbish and the surviving inhabitants to terror-stricken flight in a short time.

The only military stationed on the Island were a cadre of Philippine Army troops and a small contingent of Constabulary. The surprise of the onslaught had been absolute, and confronted with a situation for which they were unprepared either by training or

inclination, after a brief gesture of resistance the troops emulated Abou Ben Adhem and led all the rest. The Japanese force, estimated at 1200 soldiers and marines, occupied the town of Jolo with ease as the ranks of the defenders disintegrated, their own and their families' safety becoming their paramount consideration. Many soldiers turned over their weapons and ammunition to the Moro datu, discarded their uniforms and left the Island as rapidly as possible by any available means, many families arriving in Zamboanga days or weeks later, destitute and exhausted.

Apparently content with the possession of the town and its environs the enemy made no attempt to extend his occupation farther over the Island. An air base and a naval base of great strategic value were set up and became the points of departure for many of their strikes over the Philippines and East Indies in the months that followed.

According to the statements of Major A. P. Carandang of the Philippine Constabulary, and other eye witnesses, on the morning of 26 December three United States Navy flying boats approached Jolo at very low altitude, apparently in ignorance of the Japanese occupation as they flew straight into a hail of enemy antiaircraft fire. Undamaged, the three gained altitude and circled, returning to drop bombs on ships anchored offshore. Heavy antiaircraft fire again drove them off, and enemy fighter planes pursued them. But they returned once more, this time concentrating on an enemy light cruiser at anchor in the Bay. Watchers on the shore saw the cruiser

sink, but at great cost to the Americans. One of the PBIs was shot down over the Bay; a second, badly damaged, fell into the sea between Jolo and Tawi-Tawi*. The third, although badly shot-up, managed a landing near Tawi-Tawi where the wounded members of the crew were cared for by the Constabulary until they were somewhat recovered, when they departed for Borneo by sailboat.

On 8 January evacuees from Jolo arriving at Zamboanga sector headquarters gave a detailed report of an air attack on the enemy on the night of 2-3 January, by two Dutch airplanes. According to their story, several enemy planes were lined up at the side of the field, evidently calmly certain of their immunity from attack, preparatory to a take-off at dawn, as was their custom. In the bright moonlight the Dutch markings on the planes had been clearly visible as the attackers swept in low, bombing and machine-gunning, destroying some of the parked planes and damaging others. No resistance was offered.

Verification of this reported Dutch action at Jolo - except for the fact that it was a solo attack - was obtained by Colonel Wilson later in a Japanese prison camp from Captain G. Bozuwa, who had been Chief of the Dutch Naval Air Force in the Netherlands Indies: "The Dutch Navy maintained installations near Minado, Celebes. One Dutch bomber (Dornier) from Minado executed a night mission on the enemy airfield at Jolo on or about January 2-3, 1942, and returned to Minado safely. The pilot reported he bombed and machine-gunned the airfield repeatedly without meeting any resistance

*A small island of the Philippine Archipelago approximately 100 miles southwest of Jolo.

from the enemy and that he inflicted substantial damage. The airplane carried twelve 50-kilo bombs".

The last air attack on the enemy at Jolo was made by two American B-17s on or about January 12. Reports of this attack were first received at Colonel Wilson's headquarters about January 15, from informers sent to Jolo and from evacuees from that island, among the last of whom were three Filipina nurses who had worked with the Japanese doctors in caring for the wounded.

This attack came at early dawn. In addition to considerable damage to the airfield, one large bomb destroyed a building in which many airplane engines and parts were stored. Another large bomb hit between two buildings in which Japanese troops were quartered. It was estimated that at least 400 soldiers were either killed or seriously wounded by this bomb strike. There were insufficient medicines and bandages on hand to care for the casualties.

The authenticity of this report was also verified by Colonel Wilson while in prison camp from notes retained in the possession of Colonel Emile T. Kengen, Chief, Dutch Air Corps, Netherlands Indies. Colonel Kengen stated that "this mission was executed by two American B-17s operating under Dutch orders from a Dutch airdrome called Samarinda II, in Dutch Central Borneo. They flew at 8000 meters altitude. Upon their return the pilots reported the mission accomplished without encountering resistance. The objective was hit and substantial damage inflicted."

Little more had been accomplished on the Zamboanga airfield

since Christmas, the panic of the Sulus having run like quicksilver among the Moro laborers. During the afternoon of New Year's Day seven enemy planes circled low over the city and the airfield. In three strafing runs the enemy machine gunners succeeded in wounding only four or five people and killing a dog - an accomplishment rather widely at variance with Radio Tokyo's subsequent claim that "five hundred people were killed and the City left in flames". No bombs were dropped and no fires resulted, indicating that the objective of the mission was not primarily to cause destruction, but rather to precipitate confusion and panic. If so, they succeeded beyond their wildest dreams, for they accomplished the total demoralization of the workers on the airfield, who dropped their tools and decamped en masse. They could not, with any inducements, be persuaded to return. On the Sunday following the raid the entire 1600 men were paid off and, on order of the Commanding Officer, the irrigation ditches were reopened and the unfinished field flooded.

Most of the frightened populace fled into the mountains following the air raid, leaving homes and business establishments unprotected. Even the members of the municipal police force, succumbing to the contagion, deserted their posts for days to convoy wives and children into the hills, leaving the city wide open to looters.

A short time previous to this a Moro bolo battalion had been organized and placed under the authority of Datu Topan*. This

*Members of this battalion were provided with blade weapons and food and given training but were not inducted into military service of either the United States or the Commonwealth of the Philippines.

battalion, which was composed mainly of fishermen (Maringos) evidently considering this situation a heaven-sent opportunity, promptly resolved itself into small marauding bands, plundering, raping and murdering.* Patrols of Scouts from Pettit Barracks, dispatched to suppress the robberies and bring in the bandits, found the renegades as elusive as smoke. It was never possible to bring these men under control again nor to recover the weapons which had been issued to them. The city was ultimately cleared of them, but they continued to roam the coasts in their swift vintas plying their nefarious works at every opportunity. It became necessary to maintain a motor launch patrol over more than one hundred miles of coastline in order to protect our line of communication and the local citizenry from these ruthless assaults by their own countrymen.

About the middle of November the 1st Battalion 102nd Infantry had arrived in Zamboanga from Davao for a period of intensive training preparatory to being returned to central Mindanao for duty with the remainder of the regiment. The training proceeded as projected but the unit was never withdrawn and remained to assist in the defense of the Peninsula until the end.

Early in January a battalion** of the provisional 106th Infantry, composed mainly of high and intermediate school boys was recruited; officers for this battalion being secured by calling to active

* Although some sources place the blame for this epidemic of banditry wholly on this battalion, other evidence would indicate that the Moros were joined by other renegades.

**First battalion - the only battalion of this provisional regiment organized.

duty such reserve officers as were still available, mostly school teachers and city officials. Philippine Army sources provided uniforms, clothing and weapons for about half the battalion, the remainder being supplied from the scanty reserve stocks at Pettit Barracks, including the Springfield rifles which had formerly belonged to the Scouts.

The personnel of this outfit, although wholly untrained, were intelligent and eager and made rapid progress. This was the battalion which proved to be the mainstay of the Peninsula's defense during the invasion.

On 25 January, under orders from General Sharp, Colonel Dalton with Major Peck and Captain Breitling started with the two Philippine Scout companies for Lake Pinamaloy, in Bukidnon Province, where a school of artillery and infantry tactics in which they were to act as instructors was being established. On Colonel Dalton's departure Colonel A. T. Wilson assumed command of the Zamboanga sector where the only combat troops now remaining were the 1st Battalion 102nd Infantry and the newly organized 1st Battalion 106th Infantry.

Some time previous to this all beach positions except outposts and observation posts had been abandoned and the troops moved into new dispositions, first into the San Roque district some five kilometers from the city proper. This site proved unsatisfactory however, necessitating concentration of installations within too restricted an area. It developed also that the water supply was inadequate for the needs of the camp. Accordingly, in February,

approximately half the command was moved a second time, to a location near Pasananca. The Scout medical detachment, under command of Major Jay E. Tremaine, set up a field hospital in the rear of the new position, and efforts were redoubled to instill into the completely unconcerned and frequently antagonistic native mind the necessity for the observation of certain standards of personal hygiene, the use of latrines in contradistinction to their customary habits, and the dangers of flies and filth to health. In none of the sectors did this objective meet with any marked degree of success.

During the latter part of January and February - no more aerial activity being suffered - civilian morale took an upturn. Confidence restored, merchants reopened their shops, banks resumed operations and a flourishing business was done at the fish and produce markets as the hungry townspeople straggled down out of their hide-outs in the mountains.

On 5 February Major Fernando, of the Philippine Air Force, arrived in Zamboanga on an inspection trip, landing at Wolfe Field. After inspecting the work which had been done at the San Roque Field and making a further survey of Wolfe, it was concluded to lengthen this field by some 800 feet and to expend no further effort on the new strip. Civilian morale having recovered from its New Year's Day panic, laborers were again available and work was begun at once.

A special tribute is merited in this connection by Mrs. Lund, the Protestant missionary whose own labor and devotion were responsible for the small church and well-cared-for cemetery which adjoined

the field. In order to achieve the additional length for the airstrip it was necessary to move the chapel and regrade the grounds. Without hesitation this gracious lady agreed to the destruction of her years of work in order that the airstrip might be accomplished.

In this locality conditions were ideal for the use of the tractors, bulldozers and other machinery and the 800-foot addition to the runway was completed in about eight days.

In addition to the three regiments of the Sixty-First Division which left Panay and Negros for Mindanao during the first few days of January, five more regiments, plus various attached special troops and the Visayan-Mindanao Force Headquarters were also transferred from the Visayas to Mindanao at the same time.* Apparently even at that early date it was believed that should aid from the States not arrive in time to save Luzon, Mindanao would offer a greater hope for the survival of a loci of American resistance. Furthermore, when the aid did come - and we refused to admit aloud the if that was beginning to arise in our minds with increasing frequency - it must necessarily come by the southern route, on which Mindanao was many hundreds of miles closer to the source of supply than Luzon.

This transfer involved the movement of some twenty-six troopships, by night, through waters which had been mined by the enemy, at a time when the Japanese were in undisputed control of both air and sea and when their aircraft were exceptionally active over the

*See Appendix # 4.

southern Islands. That the troops all arrived at their destinations without untoward incident is due largely to the fact that all procedures were governed by the strictest secrecy, and that all movements were made under cover of darkness.

(Map # 1
2)

The Eighty-first and Ninety-third Infantry, commanded by Lieut.-Colonel Arden R. Boellner and Major John C. Goldtrap, which formed the Samar Provisional Brigade under Lieut. Colonel Ben Hur Chastaine, were ordered to Butuan, via Surigao; the Sixty-first and Eighty-first Field Artillery to Bugo; and the remainder of the troops to Iligan. General Sharp and his staff sailed from Cebu the night of 2 January, arriving at Cagayan the following morning. Force Headquarters were established at Del Monte, near the headquarters of the Fifth Air Base Group.

The elements of the Sixty-first Division were widely scattered upon their arrival in Mindanao. The Sixty-first Infantry, commanded by Colonel Eugene H. Mitchell, which docked at Iligan on 5 January, was attached to the Eighty-first Division under General Fort and assigned to the Malabang-Ganassi area of the Lanao sector. The Sixty-first Field Artillery, as has been recorded, occupied position in the Cagayan sector, which was under the command of Colonel William P. Morse. Lieut-Colonel Thayer's regiment, the Sixty-second Infantry, which reached Iligan on 11 January, was temporarily attached to the Eighty-first Division also, and its four battalions assigned to various stations in the Lanao sector.

Brigadier General Guy O. Fort's Eighty-first Division, defending

the Lanao sector, covered the provinces of Lanao, Misamis Occidental, the northeastern portion of Zamboanga and that segment of Cotabato embracing barrio Parang and Polloc Harbor. The nature and extent of this assignment would have taxed the capabilities of a full-strength American division. In contrast, the bastard organization of Fort's division consisted of two regiments of infantry, augmented by a few small detachments of special troops - remnants of other divisions - together with a few Air Corps and Navy casuals and the promise of some Moro blade units.

The Iligan-Camp Overton-Maria Cristina Falls section, covering the only entrance from the north, other than obscure jungle trails, to Dansalan and Lake Lanao, was the responsibility of Lt. Colonel Robert H. Vesey's Seventy-third Infantry. The so-called Second Infantry, which consisted of only one battalion and was under the command of Colonel Calixto Duque at the time of the invasion, held the vicinity of Parang and Polloc Harbor. This unit was composed of students only just called up for cadre training. Its officers, except for Colonel Duque, were former teachers with no military background. Colonel Mitchell's Sixty-first Infantry, in the Malabang-Ganassi area, had been assigned the primary mission of denying the Malabang Air Field to the enemy and preventing his access to this region from the south and west.

None of these units had more than rudimentary training. Mitchell's regiment, mobilized 1 September 1941, had by 8 December been put through basic drill and elementary combat formations. Only

MAP #6 LAKE LANAO AREA

the First Battalion however, had undertaken a preliminary course in marksmanship.

Mobilization of the Seventy-third was not initiated until that fateful day of the Jap attacks on Hawaii and Luzon. A meagre percentage of its strength had received a smattering of military instruction in peace-time camps, but for the others only a few days of the most elemental recruit indoctrination was possible before these raw levies were manning outpost positions - positions which should have been occupied by more experienced troops.

Neither did these regiments escape the wide-spread and harassing plague of broken extractors, which reduced to practically zero the battle efficiency of many rifles in all commands. Here, as elsewhere, ammunition issues provided for only sixty rounds per rifle, with proportionately ridiculous increases for the .30 caliber and heavier machine guns. In the Sixty-first the supply of ammunition for its two 3-inch mortars was comparatively more encouraging until firing tests revealed that at least eighty percent of this badly deteriorated stuff would fall as duds.

Discouraging? Yes! - but thus equipped and supplied were most of the troops who initially defended the prestige of America in the Pacific.

Replacement items of shoes and clothing were so scarce that by the time of the invasion of Mindanao many soldiers were barefooted and in rags. Essential items of signal equipment were unavailable. Five ordinary antique house telephones and a meagre

amount of salvaged commercial telephone wire provided the make-shift wire communications within the Sixty-first Infantry. Three small amateur radio sets brought from Negros eked out the system.

Medical supplies consisted solely and entirely of a trifling amount of dressing material carried in medical first-aid pouches. There were no anaesthetics for battle casualties. No merciful morphine for men with arms or legs mangled or missing.

Although both of these regiments were near full strength - 1760 officers and men - on their arrival in Mindanao, the ravages of malignant malaria reduced the number of effectives to little more than fifty percent in a short time. Of those in the line, many had the disease in a more chronic form. For a period of over a month large numbers of patients were evacuated to Camp Kiethley, treated with a solution of "Dita-bark" in the absence of quinine, and returned to duty. In each case, although the fever was arrested, the disease was still present. At the time of the Japanese invasion the main line of resistance in the Malabang area was defended by a total of less than 700 men, including all overhead personnel. The First Battalion, in reserve, possessed a strength of only 350 men.

On 28 January Thayer, whose battalions had been garrisoning four rather widely separated points in the Lanao sector, received orders for the regiment to prepare for an extended hike, over mountain trails, to Lake Pinamaloy, Bukidnon Province, where the school of infantry and artillery tactics was being established.

under Colonel William F. Dalton.

Thayer's regiment, like all the others, had been on half-rations for some time before leaving Panay, and in addition, his regimental food supply for the transfer to Mindanao had suffered the same sabotage in Pulapanden as had that of the 61st Field Artillery. Consequently, his troops were not in the best of shape for this rigorous trek over the mountains. Although the airline distance is probably not over seventy miles, the actual distance covered was considerably greater due to the numerous almost perpendicular canyons which traverse the route through this rugged mountainous terrain. In spite of the difficulties, the trip was accomplished in less than the nine days specified in the orders by three of the four battalions. An interesting sidelight on this expedition was Colonel Thayer's comment that he had a great deal more difficulty during the trip with the Moro cargadores than with his Filipinos. It appeared that the Moros were afraid they were being taken to Davao where some enemy action was in progress. This evidence of fear or timidity on the part of these tribesmen probably should have been sufficient warning to place little faith in their fighting loyalties. The legend still persisted that, if the Datus swore on the Koran, their warriors would fight with all the fanatic zeal of the Moslem. This did not materialize.

The trained troop strength in the Visayas following this large transfer of regiments to Mindanao was reduced virtually to zero. On Panay one engineer battalion and one newly-mobilized infantry regiment

remained. On Negros also, one infantry regiment, just mobilized. Samar and Leyte each retained three Philippine Constabulary companies, and the Leyte Provisional Regiment was just beginning to organize. Cebu was perhaps in the best state of organization of any of these islands at this time, with the Eighty-second and Eighty-third Infantry Regiments, and a Military Police battalion.

Supplies of any sort for these troops were virtually nonexistent. Yet under the specified plans defense must be provided for these islands, so the few remaining American officers set themselves again to the task of making bricks without straw.

On Panay General Chynoweth organized successively the Sixty-fourth and Sixty-fifth Infantry which, with the Sixty-third Infantry and the battalion of engineers, brought the combined island strength to eight thousand. For these eight thousand men there was a meagre residue of Enfield rifles, with broken extractors, and about six machine guns. Nothing else.

Determined to carry on, they initiated a manufacturing program, with Colonel Albert Christie in charge. Beginning with one small civilian machine shop, he soon had every tool on the island at work for the Army. The items manufactured included, first of all, extractors for the otherwise useless rifles. Then hand grenades*, entrenching tools, canteens, matches, flashlights, batteries, bolos, spears, bows and arrows, reserve rations, powders, primers, floating mines, tripods, bipods, cots, shoes, clothing, haversacks, shelter tents, first aid packets, gas masks, and even a flame-thrower.

*Devised through the ingenuity of Ordnance Corporal (later 1st Lieut.) Emil T. Michalik.

Through the efforts and influence of Tom Powell, senior, who was well-known throughout the Island, whole villages of women and girls set to work sewing on many of these items for the Army, turning them out in short order.

The bows and arrows and bolos provided arms of a sort for the men who were without rifles. Although they were expected to be more in the nature of morale builders than successful weapons, after the invasion some of these bow and arrow units ambushed Japanese soldiers on mountain trails and exterminated them with arrows and spears. The leader of these units was Major Grino, a Filipino, credited by General Chynoweth as being one of the finest natural soldiers he ever encountered.

Selected groups of recruits were also intensively trained with bolos, to be used in ambushes, with a view to capturing rifles and ammunition from the enemy. Since the bolo is the traditional Filipino tool, used for everything from jungle-clearing and house-building to harvesting the rice crop and butchering pigs, this type of training made rapid progress.

Of all the Visayan Island commanders at this time, Colonel Irvine C. Scudder, on Cebu, was probably the best situated. His Eighty-second and Eighty-third Infantry Regiments were organized and equipped as well as the limitations of time, place and materials permitted; reasonably well-trained and presenting a little of that appearance of "spit-and-polish" so dear to the heart of the professional military man. Their heaviest ordnance, however,

consisted of a small number of .30 and .50 caliber machine guns and two antiquated mortars which had been sent down for training purposes.

Comparing the various records available on this sector there appears, nevertheless, to be some difference of opinion as to the degree of proficiency these troops had attained in guerrilla and trail-combat tactics. Admitting, for the sake of justice, that the maximum of training and instruction which time permitted was presented, later events proved that these normally-unwarlike Filipinos had not absorbed the military knowledge required to cope with their trained and disciplined invader.

Cebu was also without many of the inadequacies of supply which plagued the other islands, due largely if not entirely to the fact that the main quartermaster base for the southern islands was established there on 25 November 1941. The woefully few cargo carriers, with but one or two exceptions*, which ran the Japanese blockade to the Philippines, put in at Cebu and most of the supplies perforce remained on the Island.

Early in January 1942, Dr. V. R. Browne, a civilian who had been professor of chemistry at the University of Spain, was employed by the Army to try to manufacture hand grenades and other simple explosives. Iron was obtainable on Cebu and from Negros. Powder was acquired by a simple expedient. San Bernardino Strait had been

*The Coast Farmer discharged cargo at Anakan, February 1942, for trans-shipment to Luzon, and a submarine docked at Parang with supplies on 14 February 1942.

heavily mined by the Japs. Each of these mines contained from twenty-five to fifty pounds of powder. An offer of five dollars to be paid for every mine reported and recovered resulted in more powder than could be used.

Dr. Browne developed a grenade similar in appearance to the regular American hand grenade and with about the same destructive powers, but without the same margin of safety to the user. Some fifteen thousand of these had been manufactured up to the time of the invasion, of which Panay and Negros each received one-third.

On March tenth the Philippine liner Dona Mati arrived in Cebu from Australia with about eight thousand tons of critical supplies; food, medicines, ammunition and mail. All of these supplies were earmarked for Bataan and Corregidor, but due to the rigid Japanese blockade there was not a prayer of getting ships through to Luzon at this time.

On the 16th, before she had been completely unloaded and before routing instructions for her return voyage had been received from Navy Headquarters on Corregidor, there came a radio warning of the approach of a Japanese cruiser from the south. The remainder of the cargo was hastily discharged and in the absence of proper sailing orders Lt. Colonel Cornelius Z. Byrd, Assistant Superintendent Army Transport Service in Cebu, resorted to the expedient of reversing the ship's instructions for the northbound trip, greatly to the distress of Captain Pons, her skipper. In addition to the omnipresent

hazard of enemy warcraft, American task forces were concentrating in South Pacific waters, and Pons feared for the safety of his ship from these, as well as from Allied submarines which ranged farther afield, if they were not informed of his course and identity. After considerable acrimonious argument concerning the orders, the Dona Nati cleared the north tip of Mactan Island just in time to escape being observed by the cruiser as it entered the channel from the south.

Captain Pons' intention was to run south beyond the cover of Bohol, making for the Pacific via Surigao Strait, but nearing the Island of Leyte a large, well-camouflaged ship was sighted, apparently at anchor close inshore. Naturally assuming it to be a Jap, the Nati changed course to the north and ran for cover, hoping to escape without being seen.

On the day preceding this event Colonel T. M. Cornell, commanding the Leyte-Samar sector, was making an inspection tour of the west coast of Leyte when he was informed by excited natives that a Jap ship had anchored offshore near Matalom. Investigating, Cornell found the ship to be British; went out in a banca and, with considerable effort, scaled a vertical rope ladder and had a chat with her skipper - in the course of which the Colonel was persuaded to accept a couple of drinks and some British cigarettes.

The ship proved to be the An Hui, an old China-coaster, bound

MAP #7 LEYTES-SAMAR SECTOR

from Darwin to Cebu with a precious cargo of ammunition, food and three P-40s, all intended for trans-shipment to Luzon. The exasperated Captain told Cornell that this was his first trip through these waters and he had discovered -- too late -- that his chart was in error and had run his ship aground in the narrow, reef-studded Canigao Channel. The First Officer had been dispatched to Cebu in the ship's launch for assistance, but had been gone some time. His vessel pinpointed on the reef in full view of any prowling enemy planes, the doughty skipper was rapidly developing a full-blown case of jitters. There was nothing he could do until help arrived but sit and wait, and pray. One Jap ship, he said, had already approached shortly after the grounding, but had inexplicably turned away without firing.

Cornell promised to see what could be done closer at hand about lightening the ship, with a view toward refloating her. The descent of the swaying, slippery rope ladder was even more of a nightmare than the ascent had been, the rotund figure of the genial Colonel being infinitely better adapted to the inventions of Mr. Otis.

Ashore, Cornell ordered a roundup of all suitable small craft remaining in Leyte waters, to assist in unloading the vessel in the hope of getting her off the reef, and proceeded with his inspection trip.

At Inopacan he found the Dona Mati, her skipper still apoplectic with rage because he had been forced to leave Cebu empty and without sailing instructions to escape the impending enemy encounter. He

told Cornell he had spotted the An Hui and believing her to be hostile had put in behind Amogotada Point to await developments. This was the "Jap" ship the An Hui had seen.

Cornell explained the situation and asked if the Nati could pull the grounded ship off the reef. Captain Pons agreed to try on the flood tide at dawn, provided Cornell would first make the necessary arrangements with the An Hui's skipper to assure his not being fired upon as he approached the next morning. This the Colonel promised to do, even though it involved another arduous negotiation of the rope ladder -- this time in inky midnight darkness.

At daybreak Cornell waited anxiously on the beach, but the Nati failed to appear. Finally, returning to Inopacan, he learned that Captain Pons had concluded the Canigao Channel was too narrow and tricky to make the attempt to pull a loaded ship off with an empty one.

Lieutenant G. W. Greene, Naval Intelligence Officer assigned to Leyte, had the Navy code and with this he was successful in securing from Corregidor sailing instructions for the Dona Nati, which promptly got under way. An American task force of two carriers,* eight cruisers and fourteen destroyers was operating against Lae, Salamaua and Rabaul during this period. Greene's action in securing firm instructions for the Nati was probably a major factor in making her presence known to this friendly force.

Meanwhile, the roundup of small craft which had been set in motion the day before bore considerable fruit, and unloading of the

* Lexington and Yorktown, under Vice-Admiral Wilson Brown and Rear Admiral Frank Jack Fletcher.

An Hui was begun forthwith. Lieutenants Tom Jurika and James Cushing managed the removal of the three P-40s, hiding them in a secluded and well-protected spot near the beach, from which they were later lightered down to Mindanao to be assembled by mechanics of the 5th Air Base.

The heterogeneous fleet of bancas, vintas and the like were little more than well-started on their unloading project when the An Hui's First Officer returned from Cebu with a tug and a string of lighters and took over. But the tinned foods and ammunition which Cornell's men had removed stayed on Layte, and even this small addition to their stores was of great value.

These troops were still without sufficient ammunition to hold a defensive position however, having about 30 rounds per rifle and approximately 500 rounds for each of the six machine guns. Not over two-thirds of the ultimate 2600 troops in this sector were armed at all. Manufacturing of uniforms, shoes, rope, grenades and bolos was carried on, and mortars, with shells, were in an experimental stage at the time of the surrender.

The overall situation in this sector had for some time been extremely difficult. The movement of all Philippine Army troops from Samar had caused considerable alarm among the inhabitants of the Island, who began evacuating in large numbers, even to the extent of seeking refuge in other Islands. With the cooperation of Governor Lucerno, Colonel Cornell had succeeded in controlling the panic sufficiently to halt the evacuation and persuade most of the populace

to return to their normal pursuits, especially encouraging them to plant and harvest their crops.

The six Philippine Constabulary companies left on these two islands were essentially police force organizations without supporting weapons and inadequately trained in combat tactics. Very few supplies and weapons were available and practically no ammunition was on hand with which to equip the Provisional Regiment which had been organized on Leyte in January. No Filipino officers were available to assist with the training. However, Major Juan Causing, commander of this embryo regiment, was an exceptionally fine type of Filipino officer, and performed his difficult task very efficiently, taking almost entire charge of the organization of this regiment.

The three Navy Intelligence officers sent from Corregidor to Leyte and Samar in February were attached to this sector upon completion of their assignment for the Navy, thus relieving to this extent the burden carried by Colonel Cornell and Captain Whitehurst.

Airfields had been under construction since late in December at Ormoc and Tacloban, under the supervision of 1st Lieutenant Irvine C. Spotte, formerly manager of the Samar Mining Company and newly commissioned in the Corps of Engineers. This work was finished early in February and Lieutenant Spotte was then transferred to Cebu.

The one regiment left on Negros, the 74th Provisional Infantry,

had been recruited late in December after a thorough search of Philippine Army Cadre camps had disclosed sufficient weapons to arm the men. Selected officers, American and native, at considerable loss to the parent organization were transferred from the 61st Infantry to the infant regiment, including Captain Samuel Creager Jones, to the command. Lacking previous combat experience he nevertheless was a most capable officer, energetic and enthusiastic, of unbounded energy and initiative. Under his direction, the regiment made fair progress in training and assumed the responsibilities and duties of the 61st Infantry upon its departure for Mindanao.

The senior officer of the Negros Sector after Colonel Mitchell's departure, Lt. Colonel Gadar, Philippine Army, immediately undertook to bolster the weakened defenses of the Island by recruiting still another - the 75th - Provisional Infantry Regiment*, which was not a fully organized regiment since it consisted of only two rifle battalions and a headquarters battalion. The two rifle battalions were eventually more or less armed. Their weapons consisted partly of the small number of serviceable model 1917 rifles available, partly of such shotguns, .22 caliber sporting rifles and other oddments as could be rounded up locally and a residue of "single-shot" Enfields with broken extractors, necessitating the use of a ramrod after each shot for the removal of the cartridge case. Since ammunition, in the combat sense of the word, was virtually nonexistent

*The Table of Organization for the Philippine Army Infantry Regiment called for four battalions - 3 rifle battalions and a headquarters battalion. The rifle battalions consisted of 3 rifle companies and machine gun company. The headquarters battalion included a headquarters and service company; a special weapons company which had a few .50 cal. mgs and trench mortars; a signal group - usually a platoon; and a pioneer group - also a platoon - for minor demolitions and engineer work.

this was not the major difficulty it would appear for in the event of hostilities the guns would be of little use anyway, except as clubs.

The headquarters battalion however, although essentially complete as to personnel was woefully short of weapons and still shorter of ammunition. Its only arms were salvage from the sunken Panay and were only partly functional - its ammunition was from the same source and of the same quality. Of the 12 machine guns on the island apparently none were assigned to this regiment. Therefore, while organizationally the outfit was composed of three battalions, from an actual combat standpoint there were only two - and even this an optimistic view.

On 8 February Colonel Roger Hilman arrived from Mindanao to assume command of the Island. He found that in addition to the inadequacies of troops and arms, the defense of the Island was made more difficult by the nature of the terrain, the long distances between strategic points and the lack of adequate highways or railroads. The only feasible plan, he decided, was to outpost the most probable landing spots, concentrating the major portion of the troops in localities which would permit their rapid movement to danger points while protecting their lines of withdrawal into the mountains in the event of necessity.

Some time previously, under the glorious delusion of the "help is on the way" message, Captain Jones had directed the construction of a defensive position on the lower southern slope of Mount Kanlacom,

fully expecting that by the time it was finished the necessary auxillary weapons, ammunition and equipment would have arrived. Lacking artillery and anti-aircraft weapons the position was worse than useless - it was suicidal - and none knew it better than Captain Jones. It was never used.

At the time of Hilsman's arrival on Negros an unfortunate politico-military situation existed which the commander immediately set about to correct. Considerable friction was in evidence between the civil authorities and the military due to certain of the latter having somewhat grandiose ideas of the scope of their authority. These ideas were deduced largely from the history of the Islands. During Spain's ascendancy civil power was backed directly by the military and when civil power weakened or broke down - a not infrequent occurrence - martial law took over. During the early days of the American occupation at the beginning of the twentieth century American Army generals had functioned also as military governors until, as the various sections quieted down and became peaceable, civil government could be substituted.

Although our Constitution specifically provides that civil power is at all times dominant over military power, four hundred-odd years of rule by foreign white men have taught the Filipino that the reverse is the case. True, since the days of General Leonard Wood the Islands have seen only civilian governors, but the average Filipino considered this a sort of temporary or emergency period existing solely because there was no war.

With the eruption of hostilities on 8 December 41, Juan de la Cruz* assumed that martial law was again automatically in effect. This delusion was most pronounced among the commissioned personnel of the Philippine Army. Furthermore, the stress of the emergency which required American military personnel to ignore the amenities of peacetime procedure - sometimes to a rather marked degree - did nothing to correct this belief. Many, if not most, of the native officers understood the situation not at all and frequently assumed the right of "military necessity" where none existed, with occasional disastrous results.

This condition prevailed throughout the Islands to some extent, but appears to have been most troublesome on Negros. Hilsman was able to effect some improvement during the succeeding two months but his health, which had not been robust for some time, again gave way and on 7 April General Chynoweth transferred him to Cebu to afford him a rest from responsibility and ordered Colonel Carter McLennan over from Panay to command Negros.

The invasion of Cebu the day after McLennan's assumption of command on Negros reemphasized the probable imminence of similar action there, prompting changes in troop dispositions. At this time small detachments were scattered in all the major barrios along the coast. These dispositions, while maintaining some pretense of being militarily and tactically organized, had been made largely to placate the civil population which apparently felt secure if a few squads of soldiers were visible about the town from time to

* John Doe of the Philippines, or the man in the street.

time. It was not necessary to tell them that such was not the case. In the event of an invasion they would learn it fast enough. In the meantime if they could be kept calmly at work, so much the better.

However in the event of an invasion which would in all probability be made at or before dawn, the commander of troops thus scattered would be faced with one of two problems. The Nip must be held at or near his landing points by defensive and delaying action throughout the day; or a withdrawal must be made in full daylight - in which case, Nip air being what it was, the troops would probably be bombed to hell in short order. Furthermore, in the event an attempt to hold was made with these green and poorly equipped troops, the withdrawal after the action would be burdened with wounded for which neither motor transportation nor hospitals were available.

McLennan, determined that his recruits should reach the mountain area with whole skins and with such ammunition as was then available, subdivided the Island into five sectors and assigned one rifle battalion to each, with orders to proceed at once to their respective areas prepared to carry on guerrilla warfare if and when it became necessary. No unit was to assume any fixed location, all were to remain mobile and with companies separated. Realizing the utter futility of attempting any real defense of the Island with the troops and arms available, McLennan's idea was to present no concentrations which would be worthwhile attacking, yet to provide by small encounters with the invader widely separated throughout the Island, sufficient irritating annoyances

to keep a sizeable enemy garrison occupied, thus preventing its employment elsewhere. Small groups were to be kept posted along the seacoast near the important towns and the more probable hostile landing points with the sole mission of furnishing warnings of such landings. These were observation groups only and were not intended to offer any resistance themselves.

"We proposed", says McLennan, "to maintain this 'irritating action' until the Americans returned. Then, if we had any ammunition left, we would come down out of the mountains and kick the Nips in the tail while they were defending the beaches. It was all a very lovely idea, on paper, but I am not at all sure how it would have worked out."

Unfortunately for Hilsman, the Jap invasion of Cebu within twenty-four hours of his arrival there on 9 April nullified any opportunity for rest and on 14 April he returned to Negros where, since he was senior to McLennan, he reassumed command.

The transfer of the three regiments of the Sixty-first Division from Panay and Negros to Mindanao was in compliance with a letter which General Sharp, the commander of the Visayan-Mindanao Force, had received from General MacArthur on 31 December. This letter (see facing page) indicated a new mission for, and redistribution of troops throughout all the Southern Islands of the Archipelago, including the transfer of Visayan-Mindanao Force Headquarters from Cebu to Mindanao.

On 31 December General Sharp received a letter from General MacArthur. The gist of this letter was as follows:

1. That all of Luzon except the lower end of the Bataan Peninsula was in the hands of the Japanese.

2. That Bataan and the fortified islands in Manila Bay would be held.

3. That General Sharp would move his headquarters to Mindanao.

4. That not less than one division would be moved from the Visayas to Mindanao.

5. That Colonel Morse and some six hundred Air Corps men were enroute to Mindanao, that these troops would be used as Infantry.

6. That no further aid could be expected from Manila.

7. That General Sharp would make every effort to establish and maintain contact with our Forces in Australia and the East Indies.

8. That General Sharp was in command of the Air Force in Mindanao.

9. That improvement and expansion of air fields would continue throughout the Visayas and Mindanao.

10. That the mission of the troops on Mindanao was the holding of the Air Corps installation of that island, so that they would be denied to the enemy and available for our air force when relief arrived.

While not at that time apparent to us, the meaning of these rather far-reaching troop movements later appeared to be according to a strategical plan of considerable importance. It was probably closely related to General MacArthur's plan to break out of Bataan via Subic Bay, and with the remnants of the Luzon Force join General Sharp's troops in Mindanao.

In the southward march of Empire, Mindanao with its fine harbors and tremendous natural resources was, to the Japanese, an even more important springboard than Luzon. For many years Japanese "farmers" had been settling in Davao Province until there were now more than 25,000 of them. Some, and probably most, of these were still loyal sons of Nippon. Some 7000 of them were reported to be Japanese Army reservists, armed and waiting only for the proper signal.

Before dawn on the morning of 20 December 1941, a large Japanese task force, composed of fourteen transports escorted by six destroyers, plus four cruisers and two aircraft carriers under the command of Admirals Tanaka and Takagi, steamed into Davao Gulf.

(Map # 8)

The American Filipino forces in Davao at this time were small, consisting of 2nd Battalion, 101st Infantry and 2nd Battalion, 82nd Infantry, armed with Enfield rifles, bolos, and a few .30 calibre machine guns. The American commander, Lt. Colonel Roger Hilsman, being greatly outnumbered in both men and weapons, and with his unsteady troops evaporating into the hills, was shortly forced to abandon the struggle, and led the remnants of his command over hill

trails to the north.

At Davao, as was the case in almost every encounter with the enemy, there were heroic incidents in keeping with the finest traditions of the military service. The action of 2nd Lieutenant Milton E. May, formerly a corporal of the Thirty-first Infantry, merits the recognition due a courageous and resourceful soldier. Mounting a machine gun in a truck he took position covering a possible beach landing-site. Japanese landings were twice attempted on this section of the beach. In the first attempt Lieutenant May permitted the boats to approach close to shore before opening fire. The withering fire of this lone machine gun caused the Nips to withdraw in the direction of their transports, with extremely heavy losses.

(Maps # 8,
#10)

Naval gunfire being then concentrated on the machine gun truck scored a direct hit. The gun was destroyed and its crew killed. The force of the explosion knocked May out, blew his helmet from its liner and covered him with blood. Regaining consciousness, he returned to the command post, apparently not seriously injured. He assembled a platoon of volunteers and led them back to the beach in time to repulse another landing effort. He remained in position until ordered to withdraw.*

Other than this exploit, the Japanese landings at Davao, Taloma and Malalag were virtually unopposed. An enemy seaplane base was established at Taloma Bay, just south of Davao, and with

*Lieutenant May survived the bombing of the prison-ship Oryoku Maru in Subic Bay in December '44, but was lost in the subsequent bombing of the Enoura Maru 9 January '45.

the arrival of fighter aircraft from the Eleventh Air Fleet a few days later, the Japanese foothold in Davao was secure.

Contact having been lost between General Vachon's Division Headquarters at Malaybalay and the forces in Davao on the morning of the twentieth, two battalions* under the command of Colonel Howard W. Frissell were ordered to move out immediately for Davao from Malaybalay, some 300 kilometers distant, with instructions to find the missing troops and "hold the Digos-Pikit Road". This road, leading from the city of Davao on the east to that of Cotabato on the west, bisects the southern half of these two provinces, and other than jungle trails is the only means of access to this region. The Japanese landing at Malalag was an immediate threat to this area, making the holding of this road imperative.

A battalion of Philippine Constabulary troops, ordered to join Colonel Frissell's command, were already in position at Digos Junction on his arrival. Leaving them as a protection for the rear, the 101st Battalion proceeded up the coast to Darong, where they detrucked and made preparations to go forward at dawn. Scouting parties were dispatched to locate the enemy and a Moro scout who was a native of this area was sent out in an attempt to secure information concerning the missing commander and his troops.

The battalion of the 102nd Infantry, meanwhile, had arrived in its position at Digos and word was received from its commander of the landing of 3000 additional enemy troops at Malalag. Since the road from Malalag to Davao, through Digos, closely follows the

* Third Battalion, 101st Infantry; Third Battalion, 102nd Infantry.

MAP # 8 DIGOS SECTOR

coastline and therefore was constantly in range of the battle craft in Davao Gulf, precautions commensurate with the strength and position of these forces were taken.

Soon after daylight the following morning the battalion at Darong* started its advance. Progress was slow, due to the frequent encountering of enemy patrols, but an advance element penetrated to a point near Daliao. The Moro scout returned bringing information that the missing commander and his men were enroute to Malaybalay over hill trails. (They later told a harrowing tale of a very rugged fifteen-days-trip over these jungle trails, subsisting on monkey meat and camotes, before they reached sanctuary.)

Another native brought word to Colonel Frissell of the death, at enemy hands, of one of his patrols, and of the serious injury of Lieutenant Facundo Marinos, the patrol leader. The lieutenant had been taken to the home of a friendly Moro in Sitio Tudayo,** where he was being cared for, and to which the native later guided Colonel Frissell.

Meanwhile, further reports from the commander at Digos confirmed the fact that Japanese landings at Malalag were continuing, increasing pressure on the Digos-Pikit road. Inasmuch as the information received concerning the missing troops had obviated the necessity of going to Davao, the battalion of the 101st was withdrawn during the night of 21-22 December to a point near Digos and preparations were made to strengthen the position at Digos Junction. Minor skirmishes with enemy patrols took place on the 23rd and again on the 27th in the

* Third Battalion, 101st Infantry, under Major Arlie W. Higgins.

** A small Moro barrio near Darong.

abaca groves near the Padada Plantation south of Digos on the road to Malalag. On the 27th also, a detachment of Philippine Army artillery, consisting of three of the 2.95 guns, under command of Captain Acosta, reported to Colonel Frissell.

This artillery arrived at the psychological moment, for on 31 December, shortly after daybreak, reports by runner from both front line sectors indicated an enemy landing in force along the shore line from Digos to Padada, a distance of about seven kilometers. The enemy attacked with infantry reinforced by tanks and artillery, and with heavy air power. The heaviest pressure of the enemy being initially against the right flank, held by Third Battalion 101st Infantry, the left flank battalion* under Captain Johnson, was ordered to assist the right. Contact was close and sustained throughout the day and casualties were heavy, among them Captain Johnson, who was wounded; and Captain Acosta, commander of the artillery detachment, killed. One of the three 2.95 guns, in position at the junction of the Padada-Pikit Road was lost in this action.

(Map # 8)

The right flank battalion held its position well throughout the morning, but withdrew later, without orders, and established a line across the highway at kilometer $69\frac{1}{2}$. The battalion of the 102nd Infantry became demoralized after Captain Johnson was wounded and fled to the rear, many of the men retreating as far as Pikit. The reserve battalion,** in the center of the line, held in part, but many men and officers "evacuated". Captain Floyd Forte, of

* Third Battalion 102nd Infantry

** Third Philippine Constabulary Infantry Battalion.

the Force Headquarters Staff, rallied a group of 150 men and dug in near Haley Plantation, where he held.

During the night the position taken by the right flank battalion at kilometer 69 $\frac{1}{2}$ was reorganized temporarily, and demolitions carried out on highway bridges both north and south of Digos. This position was untenable for more than a short interval, however, due to the unavailability of water. It was also completely exposed and within range of the guns of the Japanese battle craft in the Gulf. The troops were therefore withdrawn the following day, 1 January 1942, to new positions between kilometers 70 and 71, about 11 kilometers west of Digos, on the Cotabato-Davao Highway. This was excellent defensive terrain, and by using deep foxholes it was possible to keep the men in position.

This area for the most part is dense hilly jungle, with cultivated clearings scattered on both sides of the road. The main line of resistance lay astride the highway, and followed a small stream. The bridge across this stream had been destroyed and at this point the out banks provided good tank obstacles. The battalion sector on the right, to the south, was in a low area marked with many small ridges containing numerous springs. The left sector, on the north, was the end of a ridge which rose abruptly and ran north toward Mount Apo volcano.

Against this position, during the period January 6 to 14, the enemy launched repeated and increasingly severe attacks, but although their infantry continued to be supported by artillery and

tanks, with bountiful air cover, they were unable to advance, and sustained numerous casualties in their attempts. Their artillery continued to shell our rear areas with considerable damage, however, and their planes bombed nearby barrios, inflicting some casualties. One small bomb dropped near our front lines scored a direct hit on one of the remaining 2.95 guns, putting it out of action. The third and last of the artillery pieces was then withdrawn, on the Division Commander's order, to Pinamaloy, where an Artillery School was being established.

(Map #10)

The troop strength in this sector had been increased to four battalions by this time, by the addition of two battalions of the 103rd Infantry. Bands of Moros, under their Datus, were protecting the flanks of the position and raiding enemy installations.

During the latter phases of the action the main Japanese attack, launched on the morning of the eighth, was directed against the Third Battalion, 101st Infantry,* on the south side of the highway. This fine battalion held its ground, under the leadership of Major Higgins,* who at one time during the engagement quickly controlled several fear-stricken men and prevented the spread of panic within the battalion.

Following their unsuccessful attacks during this period the Japanese apparently changed their plan and gave up any attempt to further extend their beach-head. The stand of Higgins' battalion is believed to have been one of the major factors contributing to this decision. A second factor was, no doubt, the publicity sur-

* See appendix 15

rounding the organization of the Cotabato Moros under General Vachon. Thousands of head-hunting Moros were reported to be lurking in the jungles to repel the Japanese invasion; and the Jap, even more than most people, dislikes losing his head. In this area the enemy comported himself very differently than in other sectors and, presumably, due to his fear of the Moro, did not resort to his characteristic efforts at infiltration. Jap patrols numbered always at least twenty men, and seldom left the highway.

Colonel John H. McGee recalls one incident wherein the Jap dread of the Moro kris was justified. "It happened", says Colonel McGee, "at a time when we were having great trouble in securing Japanese clothing and equipment for identification. Our patrols were active, but the Japs in these actions always recovered their dead and wounded. The Moros on the left flank were having quite a few skirmishes with the Japanese close to Tres de Mayo, north of Digos. Colonel Perry called in a Moro warrior named Pindi Piang and explained that he wanted enemy clothing and equipment brought back. Apparently the request was misunderstood, and believed to be a reflection on his veracity that Japanese were being killed, because a few days later several Moros came into the command post with a sack. It was tipped upside down before the Colonel and out rolled a Jap's head!" Its owner had been forced to submit to a "Moro hair-out".

"It was very hard", comments McGee, "to get across to these Moros what the rules of civilized land warfare meant, and why

their habitual method of fighting should not be used.

"The operation of large bands of Moros protecting the flanks sounds wonderful", the Colonel went on, "but we were never sure of their number or their location. Most of them were armed only with a bolo; they were not paid and their loyalty was to their Datu. A Moro has many reasons for returning home, and he just leaves. Before their initial enthusiasm wore off, however, I believe that they had created a deep impression on the Japanese."

In spite of the respect which the Jap accorded the Moro it was still necessary to maintain our patrols on the myriads of trails which interlace this area and which were at this time in use by thousands of evacuees. The region swarmed with enemy operatives and resident Japanese irregulars who were in appearance more Filipino than enemy.

On 18 January Colonel Frissell was transferred to the Cagayan sector as Commanding Officer Force Reserve, with headquarters at Santa Fe, and Lieutenant Colonel H. R. Perry took over the Digos command, with Lieutenant Colonel (then Major) McGee as his executive.

Japanese pressure having relaxed somewhat at this time, advantage was taken of the lull to strengthen the position. A strong outpost was established about one kilometer to the front of the main line of resistance. Flank outposts at Matinao and Goma were strengthened. Machine guns on the main position were relaid and gun positions and foxholes dug deep, although the lack of shovels and entrenching tools often necessitated the use of sharpened sticks

for digging. Fields of fire were cleared and a great amount of barbed wire was woven in low, wide belts. Communication trails were cut and vined, so that at night one could move by following a vine. Telephone wire was brought in and the communications system, which had been previously a single telephone line, was improved by lines laid to all battalions and the outpost.

A second position about 4 kilometers to the rear was organized and partially occupied as a catch position in case of panic -- always a possibility with troops who are not well-trained. Particularly dangerous at this time was the possibility of a few rounds of smoke shell being mistaken for gas.

The ammunition supply was always critical, so the forty-nine tank mines which were received one day from the Air Corps Ordnance Depot at Del Monte were most welcome. Captain John Lester, an Ordnance officer, had invented these mines, which were improvised from dynamite, a shotgun shell and a pineapple can.

Here, as everywhere, supply was a serious problem. Again many of the old Enfield rifles had broken extractors and could be fired only by the use of a ramrod between rounds. There were few compasses. The only map even approximately accurate was a commercial oil company road map. Officers and men alike wore blue denim uniforms, and shoes were very scarce. Medicines were limited -- the vitally-needed quinine and morphine almost unobtainable. Water was purified by boiling or by drops of iodine.

But the Command was fortunate in having a number of officers

and men of resourceful and ingenious disposition. One of the best of these was Lieutenant Doak, a former non-commissioned officer of the 31st Infantry, who now ran the motor pool and helped with supply. "Doak," says Colonel McGee, "had about a fifth-grade education, but a master's degree in common sense! There was nothing in that part of the Island that Doak could not find and get. One particular instance concerned the many broken springs in busses and automobiles. Doak gathered up these broken springs, had a blacksmith spread and sharpen one end, and contrived a good entrenching tool".

Captain Corvera, Operations officer and later executive, gave splendid service here during a long period. Lieutenant Tan, a native of Davao who had lost his family during the invasion, was a fearless individual and particularly good in the jungle. Lieutenant Diehl, from Malalag, was in charge of a patrol of scouts upon whom the command depended for enemy information. Wan Dag Dag, a civilian of the Digos area, was inducted and furnished much valuable information. A detachment of engineers under Lieutenants Felipe, Ong Ping and Avis became indispensable. Lieutenant Ross Miller, the Division Engineer officer was excellent; as were Lieutenant Cabrera, supply; Captain Bernardo, medical officer; and many others.

Some time during February the Moros on the flanks were withdrawn for training and reorganization. Their number had dwindled until they could not be counted on as dependable security. But

they had done fine work, without pay. Colonel* McGee considered Pindi Piang one of the finest fighters he had ever known, and very loyal to the Americans.

About 19 February Colonel Perry was transferred to Force Headquarters and Major McGee assumed command of the Digos area.

*Major McGee promoted to Lieutenant Colonel 10 April '42.