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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 20TH INFANTRY (6TH INF. DIV.)
AT MUNOZ, LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS (LUZON CAMPAIGN).
30 JAN. to 8 FEB. 1945.

type of operation described: ANNIHILATION OF JAPANESE
TANK REGIMENT BY U.S. INFANTRY REGIMENT

Captain Michael Kane, Jr., Infantry

2 1/4 x 3 1/4

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 20TH INFANTRY (6th Infantry Division)
IN THE BATTLE OF MUNOZ, 31 Jan.- 7 Feb. 1945
(LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of a Rifle Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 20th Infantry, 6th Infantry Division (U.S.), in one of its outstanding battles during the Luzon, Philippine Islands Campaign (9 Jan.- 4 July 1945). This was the Battle of Munoz. It was in this battle that the 20th Infantry Regiment completely destroyed the Japanese 6th Tank Regiment which had been strongly reinforced.
(1)

In order to orient the reader properly, it will be necessary to go back to the beginning of the Luzon Campaign on 9 Jan. 1945 and give a short resume of the events that lead up to this battle which, in the writer's opinion will be marked as one of the greatest battles of Infantrymen against tanks. (2)

During the latter part of 1944 the South-Pacific Forces under command of General Douglas MacArthur had occupied strategic points on New Guinea to its most westernly tip at Sansapor. The rapid success of these forces and the success of our Allied Naval and Air Forces in the Pacific obviously set the stage for the assault for the re-taking of the Philippine Islands. (3)

The first assault was on the Island of Morotai which was followed shortly thereafter by the amphibious operation on the Island of Leyte. Both operations were highly successful there- by pushing our front lines farther north and nearer to the door of Japan. With the conquest of Leyte and the subsequent

(1, 2, 3) Personal Knowledge, self.

building of Air Strips, the Allied Air Forces did a remarkable job of reducing very quickly Japanese air activity over the Philippine Islands to a point where it was almost nil at the time of the amphibious operation on the island of Luzon. (4)

With the completion of the Moratai and Leyte operations the stage was again set to push farther north. To accomplish this the M1 Operation was scheduled to take place 20 Dec. 1944. M1 Operation was to involve an amphibious landing in the Lingayen Gulf Area of Central Luzon, Philippine Islands, by the U.S. Sixth Army Troops supported by Allied Air and Naval Forces, with the objective of reoccupying the Central Plains-Manila Area. However the amphibious landing was postponed until 9 Jan. 1945, because of a shortage of shipping and the fact that supplies were scattered among widely separated bases throughout the theater. The same was true of personnel replacements and the returning of casuals. (5)

The liberation of Luzon, the industrial and cultural heart of the Philippine Islands, was the culmination of three long years of fighting "on the way back". The Sixth U.S. Infantry Division, which was one of the four Sixth Army divisions which were to establish the initial beachhead at Lingayen Gulf, had been pointing for D-Day for many months. It had undergone extensive desert and motorized training in the United States, had trained for jungle fighting on Oahu, had been introduced to the actual rigours in the jungle at Milne Bay, New Guinea, and then met the test of combat on Lone Tree Hill at Maffin, Dutch New Guinea. (6)

At Sansapor, Dutch New Guinea, the Sixth Division, in

(4) Personal Knowledge, self; (5) A-1, p.1; Personal Knowledge, self; (6) A-2, Forward.

preparation for the more open type of mobile warfare which was planned for Luzon, began to "unlearn" much of its jungle fighting and "relearn" its open terrain tactics. Basic squad tactics were stressed, maneuvers and deployment of small units were emphasized. The employment of all infantry weapons by all men and the firing of these weapons were stressed. (7)

Along with the mechanical training, the Sixth Division placed great emphasis on the importance of the Philippines as a friend and ally, of the moral spirit which was common to the Filipino and American citizen, and upon the customs and essence of Filipino life. (8)

On 9 Jan. 1945 at 0930I the amphibious landing commenced with two Corps landing abreast; XIV Corps on the right (west), I Corps on the left (see map A). The landing followed a Naval and Air bombardment previously unequalled in Southwest Pacific warfare. In the I Corps sector the two assault divisions were the 6th Infantry Division (less the 63d RCT in Corps Reserve) on the right (west) and the 43d Infantry Division on the left. In the Sixth Infantry Division's sector (Blue Beaches 1 and 2) two regiments landed abreast; the 20th Infantry on the right (west) and the 1st Infantry on the left. In regimental sectors the assault echelons were two reinforced companies landing abreast. Only a few scattered shots opposed the landing in the Sixth Division sector. The force of Naval and Air gunfire preparations had apparently caused any enemy forces occupying beach defenses in this area to withdraw. (9)

Advancing rapidly inland without meeting enemy

(7, 8) A-2, Forward; (9) A-3.

opposition, the Division seized and secured the Dagupan River crossing at Dagupan and occupied the towns of Dagupan and Mangaldan which were on the Army's First Phase Line. The Division now had a beachhead adequate for the Division's supply dumps. At 1100I supporting Field Artillery for the Division was ashore and in position by 1130I. Upon landing, the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry, in Division Reserve went into an assembly area west of Binloc and then furnished work parties to assist the Engineer Boat and Shore Regiment in unloading vital supplies. By dusk 9 Jan. 1945 reconnaissance elements of the 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, had reached Calasiao approximately 9,000 yards inland, without enemy contact. (10)

During 10 Jan. 1945 the 1st and 20th Infantry Regiments continued their advance without resistance and reached the Army's Third Phase Line (Mapandan-Santa Barbara-Calasiao). The Division established contact with the 37th Infantry Division (XIV Corps) on the right (west) at Calasiao, maintaining this contact as it advanced southward. The 63d Infantry (6th Infantry Division), in I Corps Reserve, was landed on White Beach and proceeded to the town of Angio, in the 43d Infantry Division's sector. (11)

Although it encountered no organized enemy resistance, the southward advance of the 6th Division was slowed initially by difficult unloading conditions on the beach, brought about by high surf and shallow water which caused LSTs to beach as much as 100 yards from shore. Unloading of vital Bailey Bridging materials was thereby impeded. Moreover the enemy had destroyed most of the bridges across the main streams in

(10, 11) A-1, p. 5.

the Division's sector, but foot troops crossed these streams successfully on foot bridges, local craft, or by fording. Heavy equipment, however, such as armor and artillery, had to await construction of bridges capable of bearing its weight. Nevertheless the 1st and 20th Infantry^{ic}s were continuing their advance inland. The 1st Infantry made contact with the enemy in the first organized resistance encountered by the Division in its inland advance. This resistance consisted of deeply entrenched, well camouflaged positions in the high ground west of Catablan. The 1st Infantry overcame this resistance and by nightfall 16 Jan. 1945 the Division had secured the line Malasiqui-Catablan. From this line both regiments pushed reconnaissance patrols toward the line Urdaneta-Cabaruan Hills. (12)

From this point we shall leave the 1st Infantry and their subsequent action and continue with the advance of the 20th Infantry in its zone of action. (13)

On 16 Jan. 1945 the Sixth Division was given the mission to secure necessary crossings over the Agno River. While our forces were screening the Agno River, an enemy force, estimated as a Battalion, was isolated in the Cabaruan Hills. The 2d Battalion, 20th Infantry, was given the mission of destroying this isolated force. Meanwhile, the 3d Battalion, 20th Infantry, was released to regimental control and began moving forward from its assembly area at Maticamatic to join the Regiment. The 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, continued forward to secure the line Balingao-Cuyapo with the 3d Battalion assisting upon its arrival. It took from 14 Jan. to 23 Jan. 1945 for the 2d Battalion to overcome the resistance in the Cabaruan Hills. The Battalion had suffered heavy casualties

(12, 13) A-1, p.6

in this engagement. (14)

Nightfall of 29 Jan. 1945 found all elements of the 20th Infantry south of the Agno River. Plans for 30 Jan. 1945 involved a reconnaissance in force of Baloc and Munoz, and if not opposed by superior forces, seize and occupy these towns. These forces were then to dig in close defensive perimeters and operate small reconnaissance patrols to locate enemy defenses and to determine enemy strength. (15)

ESTIMATE OF THE ENEMY SITUATION 30 Jan. 1945

Very early in the Luzon operation it became evident that General Yamashita, the Japanese Commander on Luzon, did not intend to give battle in the Central Plains Area, electing instead to defend strongly what amounted to flank positions in the mountain areas. He apparently hoped thereby to cause us to fritter away our forces, but his flank positions were not as effective as he probably anticipated since they did not prevent the Sixth Army from carrying out its missions and continuing its advance as planned. (16)

Activities to the South indicated that the enemy was still attempting a major displacement northwest to the Cagayan Valley. It was believed that he would react vigorously against any threat to his principal avenue of withdrawal to Northern Luzon via San Jose (Highway 5) probably employing elements of his 2d Armored Division which was the only Japanese Armored Division identified as being in the Central Plains Area. It seemed logical that he would leave a strong delaying force at Munoz with his main defense at San Jose, Gateway to the Cagayan Valley. (17)

On the other hand the seizure of Munoz and San Jose would deny enemy forces in Northern Luzon access to the Central Plains and would remove the last remaining threat of

a large scale enemy counter-attack against the Sixth Army's left flank. (18)

When I Corps made its plan to attack to the south and east on 1 Feb. 1945 and the Sixth Division was given the mission of seizing Munoz and San Jose, it was anticipated that tanks would be an integral part of whatever defense the enemy might offer. However, no definite information was available regarding the enemy strength at Munoz and San Jose. Both towns were known to have been leveled by air strikes, but past experience had demonstrated the enemy's ability to withstand our air blows. (19)

NATURE OF THE TERRAIN AT MUNOZ

Munoz was formerly a typical small Filipino barrio, with Nipa huts roofed with tin sheeting, the usual town market square located in the center of the town, a church and a school. Its only industrial buildings were a Rice Mill and a large Storage Building for grain. Both of these buildings were constructed of tin sheeting. Munoz is situated on the north side of Highway 5, with the Highway and Railroad track skirting the South edge of the town as shown on Map B. The town covers an area some 1,400 yards in length and 600 yards in width at its widest point. The terrain is perfectly flat except for shallow drainage ditches lining the streets. A deep draw or ravine about 200 yards north of the school extended from the stream west of the town to well beyond the eastern side of the town. This draw was lined with scrubby undergrowth in spots, with patches of swampy cogon grass, and a thin growth of small trees. On all sides the approaches to the town were open, offering excellent observation to a defending

(18) Personal Knowledge, self; (19) A-2, p.23.

force, but affording no cover or concealment for attacking troops. There were numerous small trees of considerable tactical value to an enemy as skilled in camouflage as the Jap. These trees were sprinkled throughout the northern and eastern parts of the town. (20)

THE ENEMY

The enemy garrison at Munoz was eventually identified as the Japanese 6th Tank Regiment, less one company, strongly reinforced, under the command of Colonel Kimpei Ida. This force of approximately 1,800 enemy was very well equipped. Tanks, tank guns, and artillery were of the latest design and in excellent condition. Ammunition and ordnance supplies were plentiful. The enemy's food and water supply was adequate and he had ample medical supplies. (21)

Ordered by their commander to resist "to the last man" the enemy forces displayed the same stubborn defense as had been encountered in the Cabaruan Hills by the 2d Battalion, making each foot of ground gained by our forces very costly. (22)

U.S. FORCES WHICH PARTICIPATED IN THE BATTLE OF MUNOZ

20th Infantry Regiment (less Company "G" and "L")
Company "A", 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion
51st Field Artillery Battalion
80th Field Artillery Battalion
251st Field Artillery Battalion
472d Field Artillery Battalion
760th Field Artillery Battalion
Company "C", 44th Tank Battalion (23)

(20, 21, 22) A-1, p. 24, 25; (23) A-1, p. 25, 26; A-2, p.21.

DEVELOPMENT OF ENEMY DEFENSES AT MUNOZ

On the morning of 28 Jan. 1945 Company "C", 20th Infantry, in a defensive perimeter one mile west of Guimba, was given the mission of sending a squad on a reconnaissance patrol to observe, during the night of 28 Jan. 1945, any enemy traffic which might be using Highway 5 from Baloc toward San Jose. The patrol leader, Sergeant Tom Long, led his patrol through eight miles of enemy territory to a point on Highway 5 about one mile east of Baloc. Here the patrol concealed themselves in the brush not more than 15 yards from the Highway and waited for nightfall. At about 2300I the first elements of an enemy armored column appeared on the highway headed northeast toward San Jose. The patrol observed that the enemy were quite noisy and a great majority of them intoxicated; also that the column was comprised of tanks, trucks, field pieces and foot troops. It was estimated to be about an Armored Battalion. At 0300I, on the morning of the 29th Feb., the patrol began their return to the Company located at Guimba. Upon arrival at the Company area at 1200I, Sergeant Long reported the patrol's observations of the enemy to the Regimental Commander who was present at the Company at the time. Immediately the Regimental Commander requested an air strike to strafe Highway 5 from Munoz to San Jose. At approximately 1500I the air strike had been accomplished. It was later learned that this air strike had caused great losses to the enemy and his equipment. (24)

On 30 Jan. 1945 orders of the Regimental Commander, 20th Infantry, called for reconnaissance in force of Baloc and Munoz not to exceed one rifle company for each town. If

(24) Personal Knowledge, self.

either company was not opposed by superior forces, they were to seize and occupy these towns. At this time the 1st Battalion was located near Guimba; the 2d Battalion near Bunol; the 3d Battalion near San Antonio; Regimental Headquarters was at Bunol. (25)

Company "B", reinforced, in their reconnaissance of Baloc met heavy resistance at the road junction north of Baloc. Unable to advance farther, a defensive position was set up for the night, and patrols operated to Baloc. (26)

Company "K", with MG and Mortar attachments, encountered no enemy while enroute to Munoz. The route taken was from the 3d Battalion's assembly area near San Antonio across country toward Munoz. When the company was within 600 yards of Munoz, the Company Commander, Captain James E. Emanuel, set his company in a hasty defensive perimeter and immediately dispatched a patrol to reconnoiter the town of Munoz. The patrol attempting to enter the town from the west near the Rice Mill was pinned down by heavy sniper fire. The patrol observed some of this fire coming from positions paralleling the road at the west edge of the town, however, no enemy activity was observed other than the firing. The patrol then crawled back to cover and returned to the company and reported their observations. During the balance of the day small patrols were sent out from the company in various directions toward the town to determine the strength of the enemy. That afternoon a 51st Field Artillery Battalion Air Observer spotted tank tracks and enemy activity in the north section of the town. Supporting artillery fires were placed on the town during the balance of the day and throughout the night. (27)

(25) A-1, p. 25; A-2, p.19; (26) A-1, p.25; A-2, p.20; (27) A-2, p.19, 20.

On the morning of 31 Jan. 1945 at 08001, the 1st Battalion attacked the town of Baloc with two companies abreast; Company "A" on the west and Company "B" on the east. Slight resistance was met this day, the bulk of the enemy force at Baloc apparently had withdrawn during the previous night. The town was secured by 15001. The 1st Battalion was then ordered to assemble and to move to Buenavista preparatory to a coordinated attack on Munoz with the 3d Battalion, if such attack became necessary. Company "L", in the vicinity of San Antonio, was then ordered to take over the defense of Baloc. (28)

At the same time as the 1st Battalion had attacked Baloc, at 08001, Company "K", following a brief artillery preparation, attacked to the Northeast toward Munoz from a position astride the railroad and moved forward to about 200 yards west of the Rice Mill and railroad crossing without opposition. The assault platoons continued to push toward the town and reached a point near the east side of the Rice Mill, when suddenly a hail of automatic weapons fire burst upon them, pinning them to the ground. This fire came from emplacements hidden under fallen tin and other debris near the Storage Building. Our troops immediately returned the fire and at the same time, under cover of their own fire and W.P. hand grenades, removed their casualties to the west side of the Rice Mill. The Company Commander then had his troops dig in to hold what ground had been gained as he lacked sufficient cover for the employment of supporting weapons or for flanking maneuver. Later that afternoon the balance of the 3d Battalion (less Company "L" at Baloc) with a platoon of

(28) A-2, p. 19, 20.

4.2 Chemical Mortars from Company "C", 98th Chemical Mortar Battalion attached, reached an assembly area about 1,000 yards west of Munoz along Highway 5. (29)

The Commanding Officer, 20th Infantry, was directed the same day to immediately assemble his entire force, prior to 2400I 31 Jan. 1945, in an advanced assembly area near Buena-vista which was about 2,000 yards southwest of Munoz along the main Highway. He was also directed to attack Munoz at 0800I 1 Feb. 1945 to clear the enemy forces from the town. During the night of 31 Jan. 1945 and 1 Feb. 1945 the balance of the Regiment moved into the assembly area in preparation for the attack on Munoz 1 Feb. 1945. (30)

THE SEIGE OF MUNOZ BEGINS

On the morning of 1 Feb. 1945 at 0800I, the 3d Battalion attacked the town of Munoz from the southwest following a 15 minute preparation by the 51st Field Artillery Battalion. The attacking formation was Company "K" on the right and Company "I" on the left. The 3d Battalion's first objective was the North-South road along the west edge of the town (1st Ave. see Map B). Both companies used two platoons abreast in the attack and one platoon in support. When these assault platoons began pushing east from their positions north of the Rice Mill, they again were stopped by heavy enemy fire. This time the enemy employed direct artillery fire and 47mm fire from dug-in tanks emplaced in depth throughout the town. All enemy positions were apparently mutual^{ly} supporting as indicated by their fire. Our troops were able to definitely locate two tanks and a field piece

(29) A-1, p.25; A-2, p.20; A-4; Personal Knowledge, self;
(30) A-2, p.20; A-4.

just east of the Storage Building. Immediately our artillery and mortar fires were adjusted on these positions resulting in destroying the field piece and setting the two dug-in tanks afire. With the 3d Battalion unable to advance in their sector, the Regimental Commander ordered the 1st Battalion to attack from the right flank of the 3d Battalion.

(31)

At 0900I the 1st Battalion in attack formation, Company "A" on the left and Company "B" on the right, approached Munoz along the south side of the Highway through a thin growth of trees. This growth was 100 yards in width and lined the south side of the Highway up to Munoz. The plan of the 1st Battalion was to attack Munoz from south of the Highway making the main effort through the Cemetery. It was thought that this maneuver would bring pressure to bear on the enemy's left flank. The 1st Battalion advanced to a point on line with the 3d Battalion's right flank when Company "A" was stopped by enemy fire coming from the vicinity of the Cemetery and Storage Building. Meanwhile, Company "B" swung wide through the open rice field south of the town and came under enemy fire when they reached the south side of the Cemetery. Company "B" vigorously pushed their attack in the Cemetery, thereby helping to relieve the pressure on Company "A" who then was able to advance eastward up to a ditch, four feet in depth, which skirted the southwest edge of the Cemetery and ran south out into the rice fields. At this point Captain Charles A. Figley, Company Commander of Company "A", spotted an enemy tank, within the Cemetery, which was firing at Company "B". Crawling along a depression in the ground he got within 35 yards of the tank

(31) A-2, p.21; A-1, p. 26; Personal Knowledge, self.

at which time he fired a rifle AT grenade at the tank with his carbine. He scored a direct hit setting the tank afire. Enemy attempting to escape from the tank were killed by Company "A" riflemen.] An enemy machine gun, located near the eastern edge of the Cemetery near the Highway, opened fire. Captain Figley was hit by a burst of this fire and had to be evacuated. (32)

With Company "A" giving good rifle support from the southwest edge of the Cemetery, Company "B" pushed slowly north through the Cemetery, suffering numerous casualties from the enemy's direct fire, until they reached the ditch running along side the south edge of the Highway. While this action was taking place Company "C", in Battalion Reserve, had been committed to protect the east and south flanks of the Battalion. This they did by taking positions to the right rear of Company "B" and extending south into the open rice fields. (33)

Dusk found the 1st Battalion generally holding a line running along the ditch south of the Highway with the 3d Battalion occupying positions on a line from the Rice Mill to a point directly northwest about 200 yards. During the night very little patrol activity was possible due to the lack of concealment caused by a bright moonlight and also due to the proximity of our troops to the enemy. (34)

Thus the stage was set for the six day seige of Munoz. The 2d Battalion (less Company "G" in Division Reserve) remained in Regimental Reserve near Buenavista while Companies "E" and "F" patrolled in force to protect the left flank of the Division. (35)

(32, 33, 34) Personal Knowledge, self; (35) A-2, p.21

On 1 Feb. 1945 Corps Artillery, composed of the 251st and 472d Field Artillery Battalions (105 Howitzers) and the 760th Field Artillery Battalions (155 Howitzers), arrived in the Division area and prepared to reinforce the Division Artillery from positions in the vicinity of Buenavista. (36)

ENEMY COUNTER-ATTACK STOPPED

At 0730I the next morning, 2 Feb. 1945, another coordinated attack was launched by the 1st and 3d Battalions. The 1st Battalion was to continue pushing northward and the 3d Battalion to attack toward the northeast. However, as previously experienced, heavy cross fires from enemy automatic weapons, artillery, and tank guns kept our troops pinned down. [At about 0900I Company "C" relieved Company "A" as one of the assault companies. Company "A" withdrew and occupied Company C's former positions to protect the east and south flanks of the 1st Battalion. About 1100I three enemy tanks, which had been in emplacements 150 yards north across the Highway from the Cemetery, moved out of their positions, apparently to counter-attack our forces. Bazookamen and rifle grenadiers from Company "C" immediately brought their fire to bear on these tanks, setting them afire and destroying them. Our 4.2 Chemical Mortar fire accounted for numerous enemy troops as they were getting into positions for the counter-attack. (37)]

Although our forces did not gain any ground during the fighting on the 2 Feb. 1945, valuable information was gleaned regarding the enemy's defenses and his dispositions. (38)

During the night the 2d Battalion (less Company "G")

(36) A-2, p.21; (37, 38) Personal Knowledge, self.

moved up from Buenavista into positions in the left rear of the 3d Battalion preparatory to committment the next morning. (39)

REGIMENT EMPLOYS ENTIRE FORCE IN ALL-OUT ATTACK

Again at 0730I 3 Feb. 1945 the Regiment, following a heavy artillery and mortar concentration at known enemy positions, made a coordinated attack all along the front. The plan for this day was for the 1st and 3d Battalions to continue in their respective sectors and the 2d Battalion to swing around the left flank of the 3d Battalion. The 2d Battalion at 0800I with two companies abreast, Company "E" on the left and Company "F" on the right, moved around the 3d Battalion's left rear and attacked Munoz from a line of departure 1,200 yards west of the Schoolhouse. By dusk 1730I they were still some 100 yards from the west edge of the town and were receiving heavy fire from numerous enemy pillboxes along the edge of the town near the Schoolhouse. At this time they had good visual contact with the 3d Battalion. (40)

Meanwhile Company "C" had managed to get two platoons across the Highway and captured the Storage Building. Company "B" had been unable to advance due to heavy machine gun fire coming directly to their front from a location just north of the Highway. The 3d Battalion had continued to hold their positions just north of the Rice Mill area and had supported the advance of the 1st and 2d Battalions with all their available fire power. At dusk all elements of the Regiment were dug-in and ready for any night Banzai attack which was so typical of the Japanese forces. However the only activity during the night was our artillery and mortar fires harassing the enemy. (41)

(39, 40, 41) Personal Knowledge, self.

During the hours of darkness a platoon of tanks from Company "C", 44th Tank Battalion, moved into position just south across the Highway from the Rice Mill preparatory to supporting the next day's attack. Cannon Company also moved their SPMs near the same location. (42)

^{105 How - Self Prop.}
The 63d Infantry (less 1st Battalion in I Corps Reserve), which had reverted to Division Control on 1 Feb. 1945 in the vicinity of Guimba, moved during the night of 2-3 Feb. 1945 to by-pass Munoz around the south and attacked the Agricultural School Area the morning of the 3d Feb. 1945. The Agricultural School was located about 2 1/2 miles northeast of Munoz on Highway 5. The Regiment met with stiff resistance but overcame it by dusk on the 4th Feb. 1945. The 63d Infantry then took up a defensive position around the Agricultural School Area thereby completely isolating the enemy force at Munoz. (43)

3d BN ← The 20th Infantry's advances on the 3 Feb. 1945 left no doubt as to the strength of the enemy's defenses. The Regiment had penetrated the enemy's first defense line running East and West across the south end of the town. This line had consisted of 6 Medium Tanks, spaced 40 to 80 yards apart, dug-in with only their turrets exposed, and with interlocking fields of fire. In the same line were two 105 Howitzers and two 47mm anti-tank guns. Both tank and field pieces had been covered by machine gun nests and numerous riflemen. (44)

REGIMENT CONTINUES ATTACK 4-6 February 1945

All three Battalions resumed their attack on the morning of 4 Feb. 1945 at 0730I. By now five artillery ^bBattalions,

(42, 43, 44) A-1, p.27; Personal Knowledge, self.

the 51st, 80th, and three battalions of the 191st Field Artillery Group, were supporting the attack from Buenavista. (45)

The 1st and 3d Battalions were unable to make any advances during this day. Small patrols from each of these Battalions, under cover of mortar smoke, managed to work up close enough to enemy tank positions where they observed 4.2 mortar fire on these tanks. This action resulted in 4 more enemy medium tanks being knocked out. (46)

The 2d Battalion, attempting to breach the enemy's line along the ~~West~~^West edge of the town, were stopped by the same enemy pillboxes employing machine guns which held them up the previous day. At this time, about 1500I, while the 2d Battalion was suffering numerous casualties from these emplacements, ^{1st S/Lt} Lt. Donald E. Rudolph, platoon leader of Company "E", with utter disregard for the enemy fire, rushed each pillbox in turn, firing his sub-machine gun and throwing hand grenades into the apertures. Lt. Rudolph's daring action directly resulted in the destruction of 11 enemy pillboxes. He was later awarded the Congressional Medal of Honor for his action. The 2d Battalion at dusk was within 50 yards of the Schoolhouse Building. (47)

During the night the usual artillery and mortar concentrations were placed on the enemy. It was later learned that Colonel Ida, Japanese Commander of the Munoz forces, was killed by our artillery fire during the fighting on the 4 Feb. 1945. (48)

At about 2300I thirty enemy made a Banzai attack against Company "F", however all thirty of the enemy were killed with no casualties to Company "F". (49)

(45) A-2, p.27; (46, 47) Personal Knowledge, self; (48, 49) A-1, p.28; A-2, p.23.

On 5 Feb. 1945, the 20th Infantry initiated another coordinated attack on Munoz at 0800I with the 1st and 3d Battalions attempting to push ~~N~~ortheast and the 2d Battalion toward the east. The 2d Battalion achieved the greatest advance of the day although their advance almost ended in their annihilation. Pushing vigorously against tough enemy resistance, the 2d Battalion, with Companies "E" and "F" abreast, attacked eastward just north of the Schoolhouse. They were almost near north-south road on the eastern edge of the town (3rd Ave. See Map B) when the enemy counter-attacked from the north using four tanks and riflemen. The enemy came south along the north-south road on the west side of the town cutting the 2d Battalion off from the rear (west). At the same time the 2d Battalion was receiving heavy fire from the eastern side of the town. Our artillery could not be employed because of the nearness of the enemy to the 2d Battalion and because the communication to the ⁶Battalion had been knocked out. All the officers of Company "E" had become casualties and First Sergeant Crowe took command of the company. Together, Companies "E" and "F" fought their way back to the Schoolhouse where they again made contact with the left flank of the 3d Battalion. (50)

Meanwhile Company "C", making slow progress because of the lack of cover and concealment in their sector, were successful in reaching the south side of the Market Square. Here they became heavily engaged in a rifle fight with enemy riflemen who were also firing at the 2d Battalion. At 1415I the enemy tanks, which had counter-attacked the 2d Battalion, continued on south along the West north-south

(50) Personal Knowledge, self.

road to counter-attack Company C's left flank. The leading tank hit a mine field which had been laid on the road the previous night by the 3d Battalion. The tracks were blown off the tank, but its momentum carried it forward another 20 yards on its bogie wheels at which time a 37mm anti-tank gun, from the 3d Battalion's positions, fired at the tank at a range of 10 yards. The tank burst into flames and enemy, attempting to escape from the tank, were killed by riflemen of the support platoon of Company "C". The three remaining tanks immediately turned about and withdrew northward. (51)

Company "B" had been able to advance across the Highway during the day's action and held positions 50 yards north of the Highway on the eastern side of the town. Upon reaching these positions, Company "B" located a tank 75 yards to their front. Immediately they requested one of our supporting tanks to engage the enemy tank. Our tank came up to 10 yards east of the Storage Building and, after the crew had been oriented as to the location of the enemy tank, they fired a 75mm round at the Jap tank, hitting and destroying it. However our tank, before it could withdraw, was hit by a 47mm shell from a mutual supporting enemy tank. This enemy tank was about 80 yards north of the Jap tank which had just been destroyed. Our tank burst into flames but the crew escaped safely. (52)

Again during the night all available artillery and mortar fires were placed on the enemy, concentrating most of the fires on the deep draw in the northern portion of the town. It was assumed that the enemy had considerable strength emplaced in this draw. (53)

(51, 52, 53) Personal Knowledge, self.

On 6 Feb. 1945, despite the heaviest artillery preparation to date, the Regiment failed to make any gains in Munoz. By this time some 36 light and medium tanks had been knocked out and as yet only one third of the town was in the hands of our forces. Intelligence estimated that about 20 tanks still remained. This remaining armored force, however, was completely isolated from an escape route to the northeast. (54)

At about 1000I an enemy tank, located just east of the Market Square, left its emplacement and counter-attacked Company "B". It attacked along the north-south road between Companies "B" and "C" (3rd Ave. See Map B). It was quite evident that this enemy tank crew had observed the unusual activity around Company B's C.P. dug-out which was located 25 yards north of the Highway. As the Jap tank approached this C.P. it had its turret gun aimed at the dug-out, and when only 25 yards away, fired a 47mm shell. The enemy shell killed the Company Commander, Supply Sergeant, and Radioman of Company "B". At the same instant, a 1st Battalion 37mm anti-tank gun, located on the south side of the Storage Building, fired at the tank and set it afire. (55)

During subsequent fighting on the 6 Feb. 1945, additional tank turrets were spotted in the northern section of the town just beyond the schoolhouse. At about 1500I a Cannon Company SPM was moved forward to where Company "C" held a line on the south edge of the Market Square. Just as the SPM was getting into position to fire at the enemy tanks, it was hit by a Jap 105 shell which had been fired from the deep draw in the northern part of the town. This shell destroyed the

(54, 55) Personal Knowledge, self.

SPM and killed all the occupants. The exploding shells within the SPM caused Company "C" to pull back its left flank about 75 yards where it held during the night. (56)

Plans for the 7th February 1945 called for the Commanding Officer, 20th Infantry, to withdraw the bulk of his forces to an assembly area south of the railway before daylight leaving a covering force from Company "C" in contact with the enemy until 1000I on 7 Feb. A heavy Napalm Air Strike was scheduled to take place at 1100I on Munoz. In preparation for this plan, the 2d Battalion was withdrawn during the night of 6 Feb. 1945 to an assembly area across the Highway south of the town. (57)

The 63d Infantry (now at the Agricultural School) was to move on the morning of the 7th, by way of covered routes, to the south side of Munoz. At the completion of the Air Strike, the 20th Infantry on the left and the 63d Infantry on the right would attack to the north following a rolling barrage from massed guns of five artillery battalions. The boundary between regiments was to be the center north-south road (2d Ave., See Map B). An abortive Japanese attempt to escape during the night of 6-7 February made the attack plans for the 7th of February unnecessary. (58)

7TH FEBRUARY BRINGS A "HOLLYWOOD" FINISH TO THE BATTLE OF MUNOZ

Between midnight on 6th Feb. 1945 and dawn of 7th Feb. 1945 the remaining enemy garrison, having lost their commanding officer and suffered terrific casualties from constant artillery bombardment and infantry assaults, decided to make their break for freedom. Their plan, as pieced together from interrogations of Prisoners of War captured later, was to

(56) Personal Knowledge, self; (57, 58) A-1, p.30; Personal Knowledge, self; Field Order, 1st Battalion, 20th Infantry, 6 Feb. 1945.

evacuate the remaining tanks, vehicles, and troops down the main Highway to San Jose under cover of darkness. The retreat was to be screened by a diversionary attack, spear-headed by four tanks, against the 20th Infantry's front lines. The enemy did not know, however, that other Sixth Division forces had captured San Jose and the Agricultural School area at this time, and controlled the Highway to San Jose. (59)

3 [This attack was carried out at approximately 0300I, accompanied by a great deal of noise all along the enemy's front. At this time four tanks in single column came rumbling south on the north-south road between Companies "B" and "C" (2d Ave. See Map B). The leading tank was destroyed by a bazookaman from Company "C". The second tank by-passed the first but was stopped by our 37mm anti-tank gun located on the south side of the Storage Building. The two remaining tanks reached the Highway and sped northward. Company "C" immediately unleashed a hail of automatic and rifle fire at the enemy troops following the tanks. Those enemy which survived this fire quickly withdrew northward only to be destroyed by the constant shower of our artillery and mortar fire.] (60)

On the street paralleling Company B's front lines (23d street-See Map B) and which joined the main Highway east of the town, the main enemy column, preceded by tanks and infantry, moved toward the Highway. The overwhelming force of this drive caused Company "B" and the left flank of Company "A" to move to positions they previously held south of the Highway near the Cemetery from where they continued to engage the enemy with rifle fire. (61)

(59) A-1, p.30; Personal Knowledge, self; (60, 61) Personal Knowledge, self.

At this time all previously registered fires from all available supporting artillery and mortars were immediately employed by the 20th Infantry. Daylight revealed that this fire had destroyed a U.S. 105 Howitzer towed by a M-3 half track, which the Japs had in their possession, 75 yards directly to the front of Company C's positions. Apparently this field piece was intended to be fired point blank at our front lines to support the enemy's diversionary attack. (62)

The enemy column reached the main Highway and headed north toward San Jose with headlights blazing on trucks and tanks, making no attempt to conceal their movement. As they neared the 63d Infantry road block at the Agricultural School, a hail of 37mm and 50 caliber machine gun fire was loosed at the enemy. Every available weapon up and down the Highway joined in the assault on the enemy column. Two field artillery battalions, the 53d and the 80th, located at the Agricultural School Area, fired point blank against the enemy's advancing vehicles in the first such attack they had ever engaged in. (63)

Those tanks and trucks which hit the 63d Infantry's first roadblock guns but were not knocked out of action, continued up the Highway. Company "G", 44th Tank Battalion, which was in an assembly area just north of the Agricultural School along the Highway, hurled 75mm shells into the remaining column and completely destroyed it. (64)

Daylight found the Highway from Munoz to near Santo Tomas littered with smoking Jap tanks, trucks, and enemy dead. The entire column had been destroyed which included 10 medium tanks, 1 light tank, 10-2½ ton personnel carriers, 2 prime movers (tractors), and 2-105mm guns. A total of 247 dead enemy were (62) Personal Knowledge, self; (63, 64) A-1, p.30; A-3; A-4.

counted and the number of additional enemy blown to bits could only be conjectured. (65)

At 0700L on 7 Feb. 1945 the 20th Infantry, with the 1st and 3d Battalions abreast, attacked northward through the town. The only resistance remaining were a few snipers left to harrass. The town was secured at 1100L. Infantrymen patrolled up and down adjacent rice fields northeast of the town, cleaning up those few enemy who still remained. (66)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The total list of destroyed vehicles, weapons, and tanks in the seven day battle of Munoz reads like the Table of Equipment of the Japanese 6th Tank Regiment and its attachments:

48 Medium Tanks (with 47mm and 37mm guns)
4 Light Tanks
4 Armored Cars
2 Tracked Prime Movers
41 Trucks
1 American Half Track
15 Sedans
1 Station Wagon
4 105 Howitzers
16 47mm A-T guns. (67)

From documents and Prisoners of War, it was definitely estimated that the following units were destroyed or rendered ineffective in the Munoz Area:

6th Tank Regiment (less 2d Company)	600 troops
3d Tank Brigade Hq.	50 "
3d Co., 2d Armored Engineers	35 "
A-T Battalion, 2d Armored Division	300 "

(65,66,67) A-1, p.31.

8th Battery, 2d Mobile Artillery 100 troops (1 PW)
356th Bn., 103rd Division 800 " (2 PW)

The total enemy dead actually counted were 1,527. (68)

Casualties of the 20th Infantry, and attachments, in the battle of Munoz amounted to 47 KIA, 164 WIA, 36 IIA, 9 DOW.
(69)

After studying this difficult mission of the 20th Infantry it might be argued that the bulk of our forces should have attacked from the North to hit the rear of the enemy's defense. However the nature of the enemy's defense was such that he could defend just as effectively from the North as from any other direction. The dug-in tanks could swing their turrets in any direction thus providing all-round defense. The approaches from the northwest were just as open and lacked concealment as any other approach toward the town.

The logic of slowly feeling out the enemy's defenses during the first day on 1 Feb. 1945 with small patrols proved wise as any large employment against the enemy in Munoz initially, without knowledge of the enemy's strength, would have been disastrous to our forces.

Points of criticism to be mentioned are:

1. Inasmuch as air strikes were available on call, many casualties could have been avoided within our forces if an air strike would have been requested immediately after the strength of the enemy was known on 2 Feb. 1945.

2. Employment of armored vehicles such as tanks or SPMS without available cover or concealment proved that they were no match against the well concealed and emplaced enemy tanks and field pieces.

(68) A-1, p. 31; (69) A-1, p. 32.

On 5 Feb. 1945, during the advance of the 2d Battalion, when they were well east of the Schoolhouse Building, riflemen from the 1st Battalion fired at them unaware that they were friendly troops. The Company Commander of Company "C" had all his troops in his company cease firing until he was oriented on the 2d Battalion's advance. This caused lack of support to the 2d Battalion during the time they were being counter-attacked from all sides. In maneuvering friendly forces, especially in flanking actions, it is imperative that all units, down to and including each individual rifleman, must know the scheme of maneuver. Units may suffer casualties uselessly when unaware that they are firing at friend rather than foe. Later this might cause hesitancy on the part of riflemen at a time when aggressiveness is needed.

SUMMARY OF LESSONS LEARNED

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. Artillery offers little solution to the problem of disposing of dug-in tanks and field pieces, except by time-consuming precision fires. However it was discovered that 4.2 Chemical Mortars employing WP shells proved very effective in destroying tanks. This type of fire accounted for quite a number of enemy tanks simply by setting them afire. Later from Prisoners of War it was learned that this WP fire was more terrifying to the Japs than any other fire we had employed.
2. Numerous small patrols must be employed constantly to locate enemy pillboxes and tanks before our SPMs or tanks are committed. Small patrols can gain more initially than a large scale attack.

3. Tanks and SPMs must have cover to operate against enemy dug-in tanks.

4. Bazookas will effectively dispose of Japanese medium tanks, however, a bazookaman must be well covered by the fire of supporting weapons. In one instance, while a bazookaman was crawling up to a Jap tank to fire at it, an enemy sniper located near the tank, not being molested by any of our fire, spotted the bazookaman and killed him. This would not have happened if automatic fire had been employed to keep any enemy from observing the movement of our bazookaman.

5. Our 37mm AT guns will knock out Japanese medium tanks unless the shell strikes the turret at a glancing angle.

6. Heavy machine guns or .50 caliber machine guns are of little value when employed against Japanese tanks.

7. After long months of teaching and training in the employment of the Bazooka and Rifle AT grenade, with emphasis being placed on the effectiveness of these weapons, the rifleman still maintained a feeling of skepticism as to the actual value of these weapons against tanks. Up to this battle, riflemen of the 20th Infantry Regiment had not engaged enemy tanks in combat. However, this note of skepticism was quickly replaced by one of confidence when, in the Battle of Munoz, the rifleman actually experienced the exalted feeling of seeing a Jap tank burst into flames after he had hit the tank with a Bazooka round or an Rifle AT grenade. One would have had to be at the scene of battle to sense the effect that swept through the lines when the Company Commander of Company "A" knocked out a Jap tank with an AT Rifle grenade fired from his carbine. Immediately, anyone armed with an anti-tank weapon was determined to be the next to account for an enemy tank.

These facts can be more readily understood by mentioning that Company "C" was credited with knocking out 22 Jap tanks with Bazookas and Rifle AT grenades in the seven day battle of Munoz.

8. In the Battle of Munoz, as in many other similar battles when the enemy was stronger in number, armor, and position, the American soldier demonstrated his tenacious fighting qualities. Even though each yard of ground gained was very costly, he still continued advancing against a well fortified enemy who possessed direct fire superiority. The American soldier's determination to win proved too much for the enemy who finally broke and fled the field of battle.