

35th Infantry Regiment at GUADALCANAL

Of all enemy strong-points in the South Pacific, that on Guadalcanal appeared most threatening because it lay closest to Australia and to the South Pacific ferry route. If the Americans were going to blunt the Japanese advance into the South Pacific, Guadalcanal would have to be the place, for no other island stood between the Solomons and Australia.

Ninety miles long on a northwest-southeast axis and an average of twenty-five miles wide, Guadalcanal presented forbidding terrain of mountains and dormant volcanoes up to eight thousand feet high, steep ravines and deep streams, and a generally even coastline with no natural harbors.

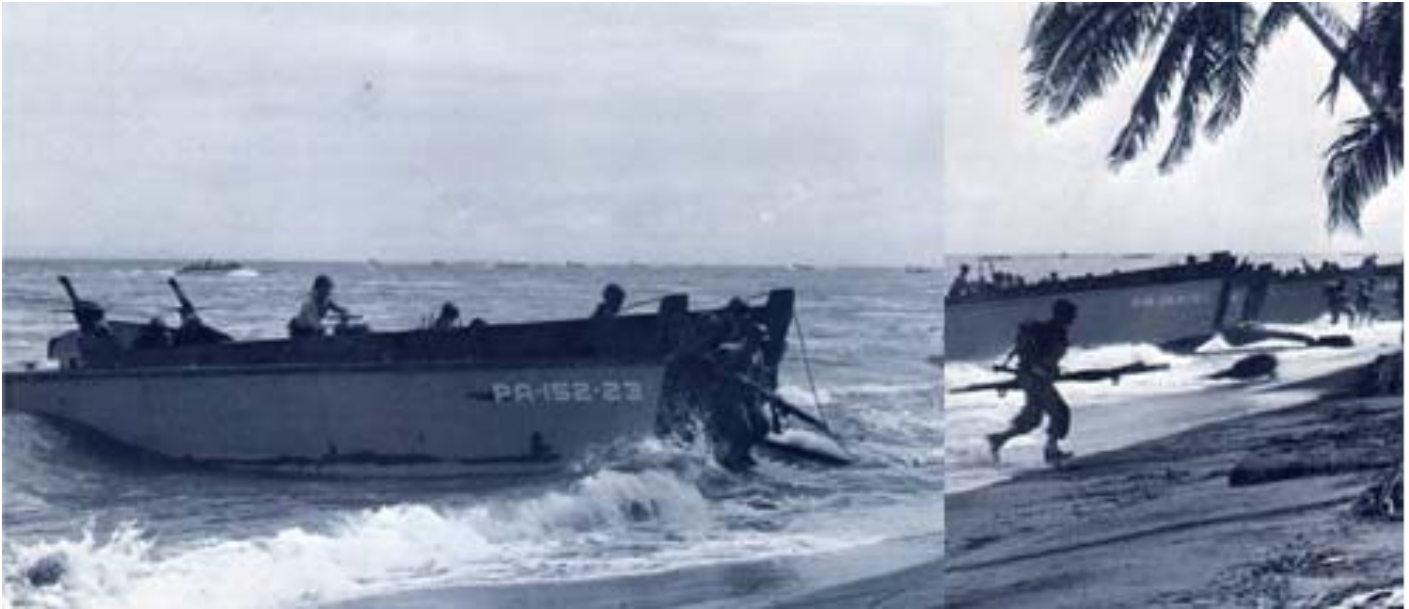


With the invasion of Guadalcanal on 7 August, 1942, in the months of combat before the 25th Division arrived on Guadalcanal, the marines had waged a hard-fought battle, but by autumn few advances had been made. At the beginning of December the Americal Division relieved the exhausted 1st Marine Division who left the island. The 1st had been part of the initial assault, and besides combat casualties, had suffered from heavy malaria losses and other health problems. With the departure of the 1st Marine Division, no large scale offensives could be launched until the troops of the 25th arrived.

Maj. Gen. Millard Harmon, commanding U.S. Army Forces in the South Pacific, determined that a limited offensive against Mount Austen, the high ground which dominated the American

positions around Henderson Airfield and Lunga Point, was necessary for further advance. Maj. Gen. Alexander Patch, appointed January 2 as the newly formed XIV Corps commander, agreed and planned the assault. After limited success in the attack, the American's 132d Infantry held positions on the hill to the northwest of Mount Austen. All preparations were complete for the January offensive.

In November the 25th Division was ordered to Guadalcanal as part of the relief of the 1st Marine Division. On the 25th, the 35th Infantry Regiment left Oahu on the first of three convoys transporting the 25th Infantry Division, arriving on 17 December, 1942. By the end of the first week in January, all three regimental combat teams (RCTs) of the 25th had arrived on Guadalcanal.

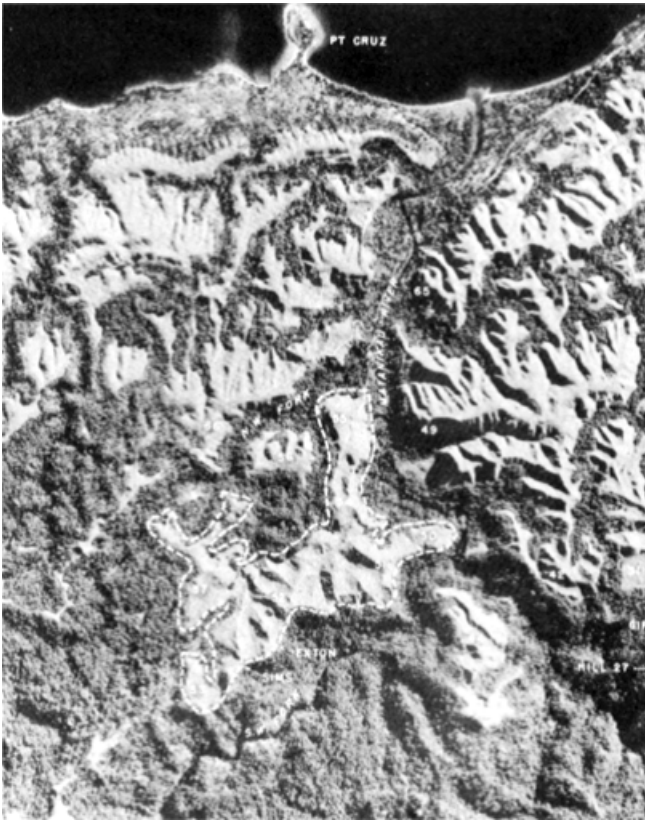


Division Troops Landing on Guadalcanal

The XIV Corps launched its offensive on 10 January 1943, and the 25th's three regiments figured prominently in Harmon's plan. The 27th Infantry, known as the "Wolfhounds", was to advance west and capture the hills that formed the tract designated as the Galloping Horse. The division's 35th Infantry, dubbed "Cacti", and commanded by Colonel Robert B. McClure, was to relieve the 132d Infantry near the Gifu strongpoint, a fortified area of connected pill boxes located between the hills northwest of Mt. Austen, and then continue its attack on to the west of the hill formation known as Sea Horse. The National Guardsmen of the 161st Infantry remained as the divisional reserve.

XIV Corps' First January Offensive: The South Flank

While the 27th Infantry had been making spectacular gains over the open hills of the Galloping Horse, the 35th Infantry of the 25th Division was heavily engaged in its zone, which included Mount Austen and the hilly, jugged areas south of the southwest Matanikau fork. Except for the open hills previously taken by the 132d Infantry, there was only one extensive piece of open ground in the 35th's zone. This ground, formed by Hills 43 and 44, was named the Sea Horse from its appearance in an aerial photograph.



Lying about 1,500 yards northwest of Hill 27 and about 1,500 yards east of the objective line, the Sea Horse dominated the low ground along the Matanikau. As capture of the Sea Horse would bottle the Japanese along the Matanikau and its forks, the 35th Infantry decided to capture the Sea Horse first, and then to advance to the objective in its zone. Like the Galloping Horse, the Sea Horse is also isolated by river forks, deep canyons, and solid jungle. The best route to the Sea Horse lay over Mount Austen, south of the Gifu, and through the jungle to the south end of Hill 43.

The task of the 35th Infantry in the Corps offensive was fourfold: to relieve the 132d Infantry at the Gifu, to capture the Sea Horse, to cover the Corps' left flank, and to push west to seize and hold the objective in its zone, a line south of the head of the Galloping Horse about 3,000 yards west of Mount Austen. For this operation the 3d Battalion of the 182d Infantry, commanded by Lt. Col. Roy F. Goggin, and the 25th Division's Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop were attached to the 35th

Infantry.

Colonel McClure, commanding the 35th Infantry, ordered the 2d Battalion and the Reconnaissance Troop to relieve the 132d Infantry at the Gifu and to press against that strong point and keep in touch with Goggin's battalion on the right. The 3d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. William J. Mullen, Jr., was to advance southwest from Hill 27 (south of the Gifu on Mount Austen), and then swing north to seize Hills 43 and 44. Lt. Col. James B. Leer's 1st Battalion was to be initially in regimental reserve, following about a half day's march behind the 3d Battalion. The 3d Battalion, 182d Infantry, was to protect the 25th Division's artillery positions on the open ground north of Mount Austen and east of the Matanikau by advancing south from Hill 65 to block the river gorge and the ravine between Hills 31 and 42 against Japanese infiltration. The battalion was to maintain contact with the 27th and 35th Regiments on either flank. (1)

The 35th Infantry's attacks, if successful, would pocket the enemy in the Gifu and in the ravines and valleys of the Matanikau forks. The 3d Battalion, by attacking the Sea Horse from the south, would attempt to encircle the right flank of the Japanese and cut off their lines of supply and retreat. The final movement of the 35th Infantry west from Hill 43 to the objective, where the southeast Matanikau fork cuts southward, would complete the trap.

Wright Road, the jeep track from the coast road to Mount Austen, had been extended forward to a point just east of the 132d Infantry's line at the Gifu, but no lateral roads then connected Wright Road with Marine Trail on the Matanikau's east bank. In the initial operations, Wright Road was to supply the four battalions under Colonel McClure's command plus the supporting artillery. The absence of enemy tanks in the 35th Infantry's zone, coupled with the difficulty of moving infantry cannon over jungle ridges, obviated the immediate tactical employment of the 35th Infantry's Antitank and Cannon Companies. Soldiers from these

companies were not to be committed to action for the present, but with 300 native bearers were to hand-carry supplies forward from the terminus of Wright Road.



When the American lines were pushed south along the Matanikau after 10 January, soldiers floated supplies in and evacuees out on pole and motor barges and boats between Hill 50 and the mouth. The boat operators used some captured enemy assault boats, and engineers constructed two barges from gasoline drums. Although they used some outboard motors, they called the line the "Pusha Maru."

Taking of the Sea Horse

Advancing to their lines of departure was considerably more difficult for the battalions of the 35th Infantry than for those of the 27th. The 35th Infantry, having pulled out of the Lunga perimeter defense on 7 January, the next day marched up Wright Road to Mount Austen in column of battalions, with the 3d Battalion leading. While the 2d Battalion moved into line at the Gifu, the 3d Battalion, followed by the 1st, cut south and west through the jungle south of the Gifu to bivouac for the night of 8-9 January on a small ridge about 700 yards south of Hill 27. (Map XVII) The mortar sections of these battalions remained at the Gifu, but the light machine guns were carried along during the advance.

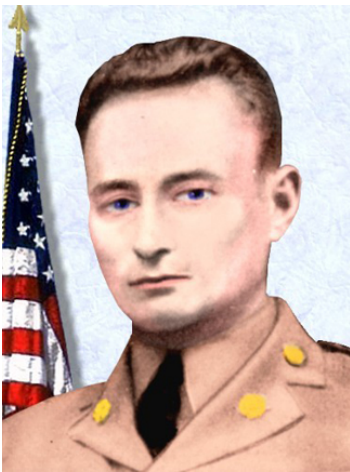
The next day the 3d Battalion marched over slippery ravines and ridges to its line of departure, a small knoll about 1,500 yards southwest of Hill 27, and about 2,000 yards southeast of Hill 43. The 1st Battalion moved west to occupy the bivouac held by the 3d Battalion on the previous night. These movements were made in secret, for success of the 3d Battalion's attack depended upon surprise. To avoid warning the enemy of the impending attack, there were to be no preliminary artillery or aerial bombardments in the 35th Infantry's zone.

From the 3d Battalion's bivouac area Colonel Mullen was able to see a small wooded hill, a short distance south of Hill 43. From direct observation and photographic study he concluded that a narrow ridge connected the small hill with Hill 43. He decided to capture the small hill first since it would provide a good route to the grassy slopes of Hills 43 and 44. (2) At H Hour, 0635 of 10 January 1943, while the 27th Infantry was beginning its attack, the 3d Battalion began its envelopment. Fearing that the enemy might have observed his troops, Colonel Mullen kept I Company, the battalion reserve, spread out over the bivouac area to deceive the Japanese while the assault companies, K and L, formed in the dense woods prior to attacking. By 0800 K and L Companies were ready to move. (3) Patrols on the previous night had reconnoitered in front of the bivouac area to feel out the Japanese. Relying on data from these patrols, the battalion pushed southwest through the jungle. Advancing in column of companies, the battalion then turned north toward the Sea Horse. K Company, leading, cut a trail for about 1,000 yards with machetes and bayonets, but its route led it down onto low ground along a branch of the Matanikau. At noon it reached a small knoll about 700 yards southeast of Hill 43. The company was then on ground that was dominated by ridges and bluffs on all sides.

The battalion had turned northward too soon, and it was now southeast instead of southwest of Hill 43. The assault companies had to advance farther west before they could envelop the south flank of the Sea Horse. (4) As hills, deep ravines, and a branch of the Matanikau lay between K Company and Hill 43, patrols advanced to the west and northwest, and one found a faint trail that led westward.

The 35th Infantry then requested that artillery fire be placed on the Sea Horse. At 1300 the battalion commander ordered K Company to advance over the west trail. L Company, also following an old trail, was to advance on K's left. I Company, which had been relieved at the line of departure by the 1st Battalion, was to follow the assault company that found the best route. Colonel Mullen, who wished his battalion to reach the greater security of high ground before dark, ordered that the advance be pressed vigorously.

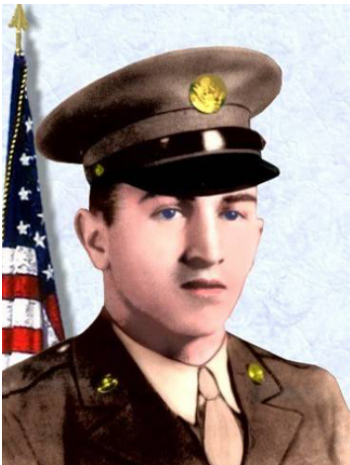
K Company turned west and, to cover its right flank while crossing a branch of the Matanikau, posted two light machine guns from M Company, plus some riflemen, on a knoll. The covering force faced to the northeast toward the gorge cut by the branch. As the company crossed the branch, a group of Japanese from the area of Colonel Oka's command post farther down the



T/5 Lewis Hall

river attacked toward the southwest and nearly broke through to strike the company's right flank. They drove off the riflemen, knocked one machine gun out of action, and killed the gunner and wounded the assistant gunner of the second. They were prevented from hitting the flank of the vulnerable company by the heroism of two soldiers from M Company-Sgt. William G. Fournier, the machine gun section leader, and T/5 Lewis Hall. Although ordered to withdraw, the two men ran forward to the idle gun and opened fire on the Japanese, who were then in the low stream bottom in front of and below them.

As the gun on the knoll would not bear, Fournier lifted it by its tripod to depress the muzzle sufficiently to fire on the Japanese while Hall operated the trigger. Both soldiers stayed at their exposed post, pouring fire at the Japanese, and were fatally wounded before other Americans could come forward. (5) But Fournier and Hall had broken the Japanese attack, and for their gallantry were posthumously awarded the Medal of Honor. (6)



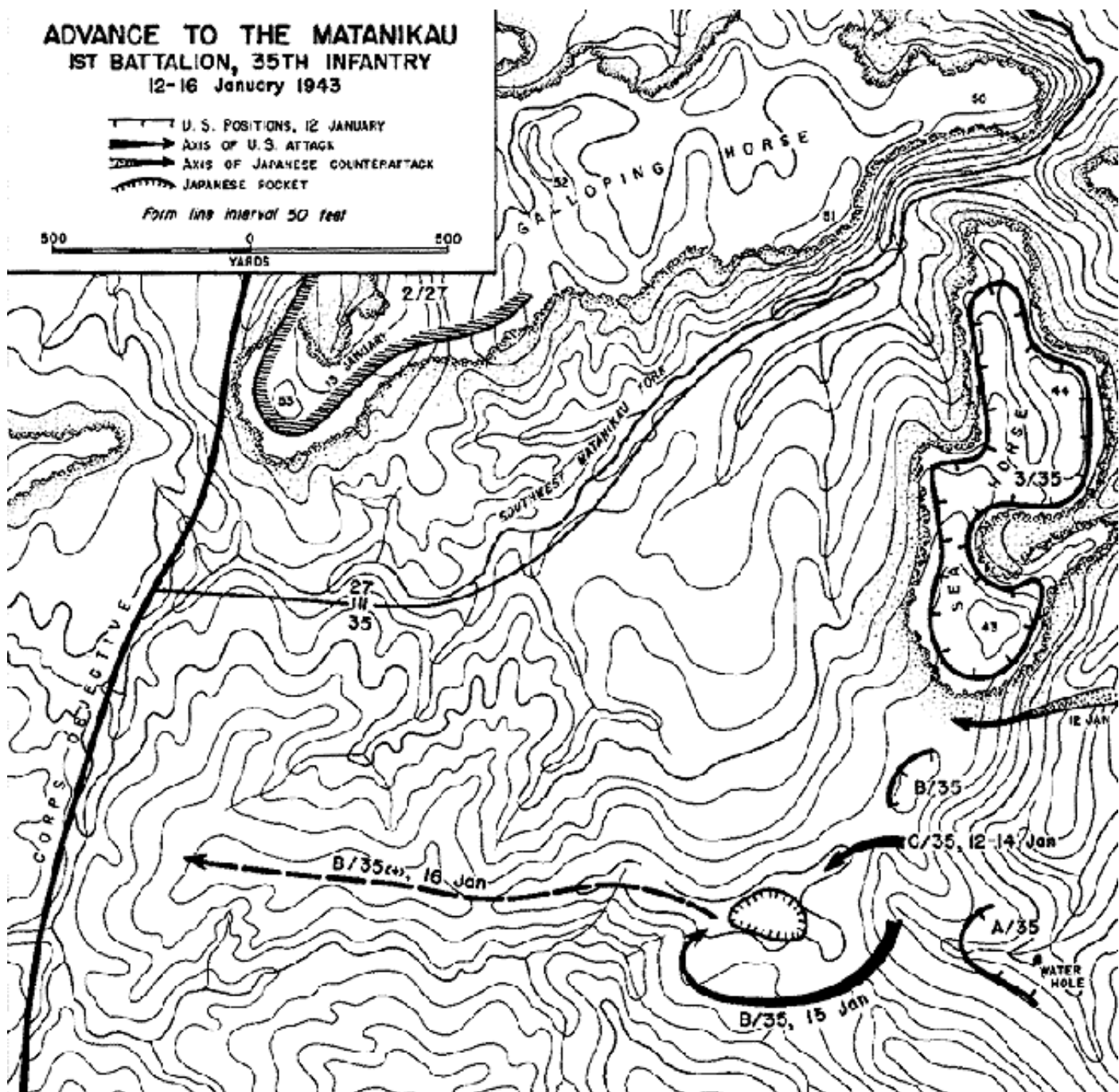
Sgt William Fournier

As the assaulting American companies were advancing to the west, K Company surprised a Japanese supply party near a water hole at the junction of two trails, killed seven, and dispersed the rest. (7) Having then reached a point about due south of Hill 43, the companies swung northward toward their preliminary objective, the wooded hill south of Hill 43. Only a few scattered Japanese were in front, and they failed to offer any effective opposition. By 1700 K and L Companies had reached high ground 400 yards south of the open slopes on Hill 43. As dusk was falling rapidly, the 3d Battalion, which to gain high ground had kept moving much later in the afternoon than was considered advisable in the jungle, halted and hastily dug in for the night. (8)

While the 3d Battalion was advancing toward the Sea Horse, Colonel Leer's 1st Battalion, in reserve, moved farther west. Patrols from A and C Companies covered

the right and left flanks. Platoons of B and D Companies relieved I Company at the water hole in a gulch about 600 yards south of Hill 43.

Colonel Mullen's battalion resumed the attack against the Sea Horse at dawn on 11 January. K Company led the attack north along the ridge toward Hill 43, while L Company covered the left flank and I followed in reserve. The progress of K Company was slow against enemy machine gunners who fired to delay the attack, then fell back to new positions. In one hour it gained only 100 yards. (9) The advance gathered speed later in the afternoon, however, and the 3d Battalion emerged from the jungle, drove the enemy off Hill 43, and by 1831 had advanced to Hill 44. (10)



Meanwhile Colonel Leer's battalion had come forward to assist the 3d Battalion when its advance was retarded. But when K Company cleared Hill 43, and it became evident that the 3d

Battalion would reach its objective unaided, Colonel McClure ordered the 1st Battalion to relieve I and L Companies on the south and southwest wooded parts of Hill 43. When relieved those companies joined the remainder of the 3d Battalion on the Sea Horse. (11) By nightfall on 11 January, the 35th Infantry had completed the encirclement of the Gifu on the east and west by seizing the Sea Horse, and had progressed halfway toward its objective, about 1,500 yards west of the Sea Horse.



In their southerly envelopment around the enemy's right flank the 3d and 1st Battalions had traveled more than 7,000 yards. Their route had taken them over Mount Austen's ravines and ridges, down its west slopes to the Matanikau, and up the Sea Horse. The trails they had followed were passable only for men on foot; vehicles could not get through. The advancing battalions had depended upon native carriers for supply pending the completion of dredging for the Pusha Maru boat line on the Matanikau. The 7,000-yard advance of the 1st and 3d Battalions had outdistanced the native bearers who could not make the round trip in one day, and thus created a serious problem of supply. Until the native camp could be moved forward and the Pusha Maru boat line could be completed, the regiment's advanced battalions were supplied by air drops from B-17's. As cargo parachutes were not available for all gear, some supplies were wrapped in burlap or canvas and thrown from the bombers.

On 13 January one B-17 dropped 7,000 pounds in four flights, and two days later another dropped four tons. Rations stood the rough treatment fairly well: 85 percent of the food was usable, but only 15 percent of the ammunition could be used, and nearly all the 5-gallon water cans were ruined. Regular ground supply was not resumed until 17 January when the Pusha Maru reached the foot of Hill 50, and carriers began hauling supplies up the north slopes of Hill 44. (12)

Advance West from the Sea Horse

When L and I Companies had reached the Sea Horse Colonel Mullen organized a perimeter defense, with L Company holding Hill 44, I Company the narrow neck between 44 and 43, and K Company, Hill 43. On the morning of 12 January the 3d Battalion made contact with the forces which had just taken the eastern half of the Galloping Horse. (13)

Colonel Leer's 1st Battalion assumed the brunt of the attack west to the objective on 12 January. (Map 11) B Company defended the hill south of Hill 43, A Company the water hole, while C Company attacked along a narrow ridge southwest of Hill 43. Enemy fire from a ridge about 150 yards to the southwest halted the advance. (14)

While patrols from C Company were seeking the enemy flanks, an enemy force from east of Hill 43 struck just south of Hill 43 against the supply trail and isolated the 3d Battalion on the

Sea Horse. At 1730 one B Company platoon counterattacked and by nightfall it had recaptured the trail.

Japanese rifle fire again stopped C Company on 13 January. The 64th Field Artillery Battalion meanwhile continued registration on enemy targets, and Colonel Leer asked regimental headquarters to send forward to Hill 43 the mortars which were then on Mount Austen under regimental control.



35th Infantry moving a wounded man through the jungle and down to the Manitaku 15 Jan 1943

Operations on 14 January again failed to gain ground. C Company attacked the enemy ridge twice without success. The terrain slowed the movement of the mortars, which failed to reach Hill 43 until late afternoon. In the afternoon, however, one of Colonel Leer's patrols found a route around the enemy's right flank.

The next morning B Company relieved C Company. The 64th Field Artillery Battalion then fired 553 rounds on the Japanese on the ridge in a 30-minute concentration ending at 1005, (15) followed by fire from machine guns and mortars.

When the artillery ceased firing, B Company, reinforced by one platoon from D, moved around the enemy's right flank and struck him in the rear. B Company killed thirteen Japanese and captured twelve prisoners; it also took two 70-mm. guns, three light machine guns, and a quantity of ammunition. B Company had penetrated an enemy bivouac area with room for an estimated 1,000 troops. It was then occupied by one platoon. The platoon had no rations; six of the prisoners were too weak to walk, and there were seventy-eight graves in the area. (16) Since daylight was ending, B Company halted for the night. The defunct enemy platoon had been the only effective enemy force between the Sea Horse and the objective in the 35th Infantry's zone. The next day, 16 January, B Company and the reinforcing platoon from D Company moved west to the objective without fighting. About 1500 they reached a precipice overlooking the southwest fork of the Matanikau. So dense was the jungle that the troops could not determine their exact location until the next day, and on 18 January they built smoky fires and fired amber flares to reveal their location to the 25th Division observation posts. (17)

In capturing the Sea Horse and advancing to the Matanikau, the 1st Battalion reported that it had killed 144 of the enemy; the 3d Battalion, 414. Enemy prisoners totaled 17 for both battalions. The 3d Battalion had captured 35 light and heavy machine guns, the 1st Battalion, 9 light machine guns. The 1st Battalion had also captured 112 rifles and 18 pistols, while the 3d Battalion took 266 rifles and 26 pistols. (18) In the days following the capture of Hills 43 and 44 the 3d Battalion reduced a pocket of Japanese along the Matanikau just east of Hills 43 and 44. (19) The capture of the Sea Horse and the advance to the Matanikau had covered the XIV Corps' left (south) flank, and brought the 35th Infantry up to the objective on the left (south) of the 27th Infantry.

Reduction of the Gifu - Preliminary Operations

While the rest of the 25th Division was advancing, the 2d Battalion of the 35th Infantry on Mount Austen had the slow, grueling task of clearing the Japanese out of the Gifu which had halted the 132d Infantry in December.

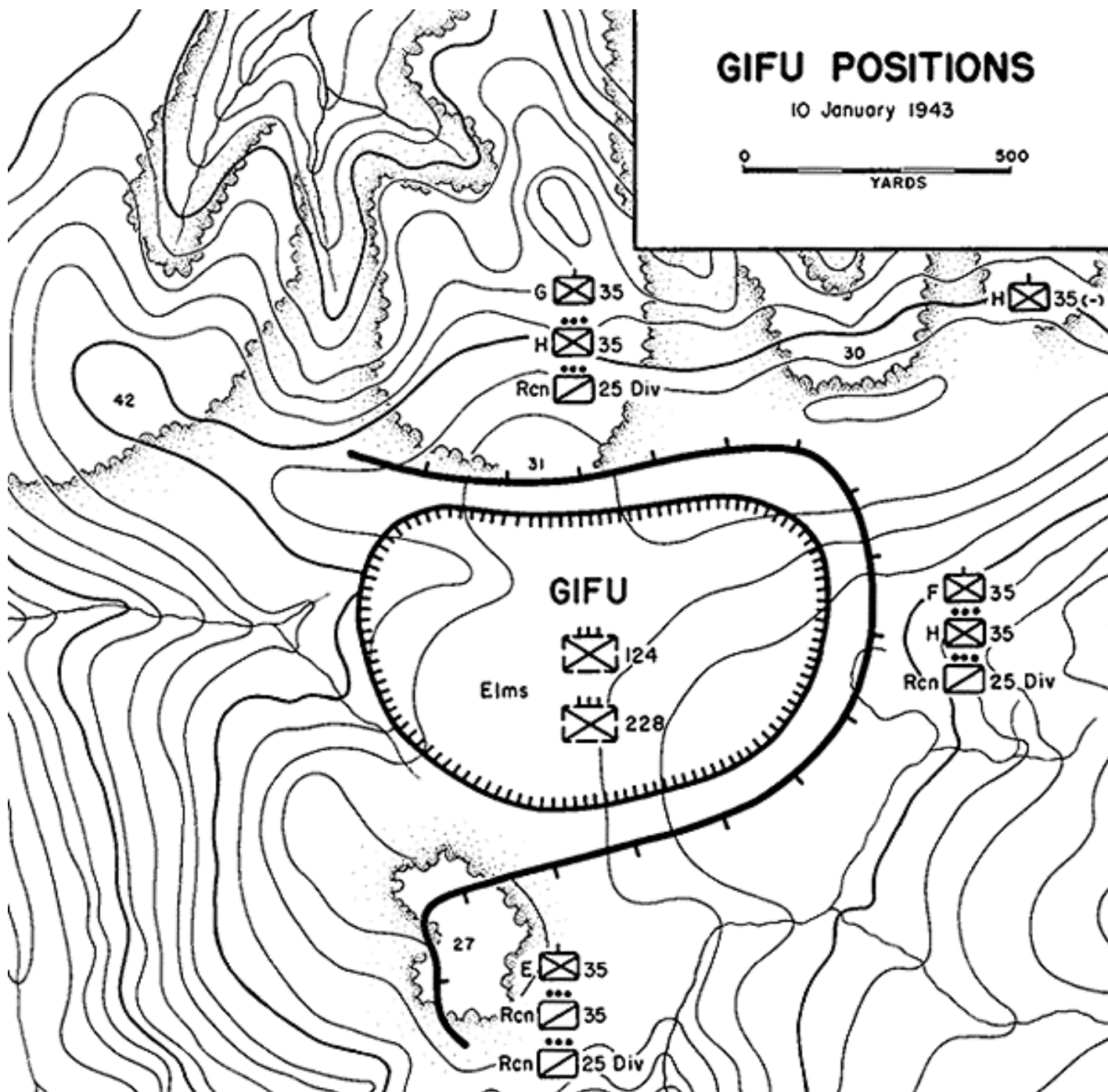
The 2d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Ernest Peters, had left its position east of the Lunga River on 7 January, and early the next morning had followed the 3d Battalion up Mount Austen to advance toward the 132d Infantry's line. Battalion Headquarters, G, and H Companies were to infiltrate directly into the 132d's line while E and F Companies followed a back trail south of Hill 27 to get into line via the latter hill. (20) The main body, following Wright Road, reached the line without difficulty, but E and F Companies had to labor through thick jungle. The companies followed the 3d Battalion to a point about 800 yard southeast of Hill 27, then turned northwest toward Hill 27. Struggling over a rough, muddy trail, and using telephone wires to help pull themselves along, they reached Hill 27 by nightfall of 8 January and bivouacked on its southeast slopes.

The next day, 9 January, the 2d Battalion and the Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop completed the relief of the 132d Infantry, which returned to the Lunga perimeter. By nightfall the 2d Battalion of the 35th Infantry had occupied the line from Hill 31 to Hill 27, a front of over 2,000 yards. (Map 12) E Company, the 35th Infantry's Reconnaissance Platoon, and a platoon from the Reconnaissance Troop held Hill 27; F Company, plus platoons from H Company and the Reconnaissance Troop, held the center; G Company and platoons from H Company and the Reconnaissance Troop held Hill 31. The remainder of H Company emplaced mortars on Hill 29. Soldiers from Headquarters Company were to carry supplies from the jeep terminus on Wright Road to the companies in the line. There was no battalion reserve. (21) By the end of 9 January, a day characterizes by random rifle fire and some mortar shelling, the 2d Battalion estimated that over 100 Japanese with 10 machine guns held the pocket.



When General Collins and Colonel McClure had first observed the Gifu from Hill 27, they had discussed the possibility of enveloping it from the west sides of Hills 27 and 31. Persuaded that the terrain was impassable, they agreed on a frontal assault to hold the Japanese while the 3d and 1st Battalions made their flanking movement. Time would have been saved had the double envelopment been attempted at once. (22)

On 10 January, when the 25th Division began its advance, the 2d Battalion made a reconnaissance in force. After an artillery and mortar preparation two combat patrols from each company tried to move forward but Japanese fire halted them all. The battalion commander then requested that tanks be sent up to Mount Austen to crack the pillbox line, but the only tanks on Guadalcanal were then under Marine control. (23) After the patrols were halted the 2d Battalion estimated that the enemy forces facing it consisted of 400 men and 20 machine guns. The battalion eventually captured 40 machine guns.



The next day, 11 January, patrols again met fire from the Gifu. The 3d Battalion of the 182d Infantry completed its southward move to close the gap between the right flank of the 2d Battalion, 35th, and the 27th and 161st Regiments on the Galloping Horse. By the end of 11 January the 3d Battalion of the 182d Infantry, holding more than 1,500 yards of front, was blocking the valleys northwest of the Gifu, the portion of the Matanikau just east of Hill 50, and the southwest Matanikau fork. (24) This move, coupled with the capture of the Sea Horse, ringed the Gifu on all sides, but its pillbox line still remained to be broken. The situation of Colonel Oka's troops in the Gifu had become serious in December, yet the majority of the trapped Japanese, who were without food or reinforcements, were to fight to the death.

The 2d Battalion of the 35th Infantry again tried to advance on 12 January to straighten the line. In the morning 60- and 81-mm. mortars fired a three-quarter-hour preparation into the Gifu. When they ceased fire F and G Companies attacked, but again heavy enemy fire blocked

the advance. By 1300 G Company had gained about 100 yards, but F Company, which was hit by intense machine-gun fire, had gained only 50 yards by 1815. (25)

American soldiers had discovered the exact locations of very few of the Gifu pillboxes. Poor visibility in the jungle, the high quality of the Japanese camouflage, and the heavy fire made scouting difficult. The 132d Infantry had shown the locations of two machine guns to the 35th Infantry; a patrol from F Company had located two pillboxes on 10 January but machine-gun fire drove the patrol back before it could destroy the positions. On the same day a patrol from E Company knocked out one machine gun before enemy grenades drove it back. The next afternoon when F Company ran into fire from a pillbox just twenty-five yards in front of the American lines, soldiers from Headquarters and F Companies killed some of the occupants with grenades. On 13 January, a quiet day, a patrol from F Company met fire from three emplacements, whereupon all battalion mortars fired into the area and knocked out one pillbox.



Japanese Pillbox

By 14 January, only 75 percent of the 2d Battalion was fit for duty. (26) Malaria and battle casualties had accounted for the remaining 25 percent. To reinforce the depleted battalion, the 35th Infantry's Antitank Company was attached as infantry to the battalion, and on 14 January moved into line between F and G Companies just northeast of Hill 27.

On the same day patrols from the 3d Battalion of the 182d Infantry attempted to find the Japanese left flank. At 1100 the battalion intelligence officer led two squads from I Company and three soldiers from M Company to reconnoiter the area south of Hill 42. Reaching a small knoll, they saw what appeared to be parachutes and ammunition lying on the ground. As the patrol circled back toward the American lines some entrenched Japanese soldiers opened fire and killed the intelligence officer and one sergeant. The patrol opened fire, but to avoid being

trapped it withdrew. Later in the day a second patrol returned to the spot and engaged the enemy, but it could not find the bodies of the dead men. (27)



Wounded Soldier Assisted Down Steep Terrain

On 15 January the Gifu was still virtually intact. On the morning of that day the 2d Battalion of the 35th Infantry attempted to break through the Gifu to advance west to make contact with the 3d Battalion on the Sea Horse. The plan called for a 15-minute preparation by all battalion mortars, after which the Antitank, G, and F Companies were to assault the Gifu and converge after gaining 500 yards on their respective fronts. E Company, in reserve on Hill 27, was to help envelop the strongest points of enemy resistance developed by the attack.

The mortars fired from 0645 to 0700, whereupon the assault companies tried

to advance. A few moved forward, but the majority of the 2d Battalion was halted almost immediately. G Company gained 100 yards, but by 0940 it had been halted by machine guns. The soldiers replied with grenades and a flame thrower operator from Division Headquarters Company tried unsuccessfully to burn out the enemy. (28) G Company was unable to advance after 0940 and returned in the afternoon with the rest of the battalion to its original lines.

Attacking northward from Hill 27, F Company could make no progress. The Antitank Company advanced west a few yards but halted when fire from the eastern pillboxes killed five and wounded ten soldiers. When the Antitank and F Companies lost contact in the morning, twelve soldiers from H Company moved in to fill the gap but were thrown back after losing two killed and one wounded. (29) The Pioneer Platoon from Battalion Headquarters Company then filled the gap. F Company was still attempting to advance north at 1510 when E Company moved off Hill 27 to try to envelop the enemy in front of F. This effort failed when a misunderstanding of orders caused the entire battalion to withdraw to its original line. About 1630 the battalion executive officer ordered one badly shaken platoon from G Company to withdraw, but as the order was passed verbally along the line, the soldiers misinterpreted it as an order to the entire battalion to retire, and all fell back. (30)

Bombardment and Envelopment

Colonel McClure, the regimental commander, relieved the 2d Battalion commander on 16 January and placed the battalion under command of Lt. Col. Stanley R. Larsen. (31) After assuming command Colonel Larsen reconnoitered his front and correctly concluded that mutually supporting pillboxes ringed the easternmost three-fifths of the Gifu line. Individual combat groups of riflemen and machine gunners held the western areas. The enemy positions could not be bypassed, he decided; the Japanese in the Gifu apparently had no intention of escaping but preferred to hold out until death. (32)

The position of the defenders of the Gifu had been rapidly deteriorating. They ate their last rations sometime between 10 and 17 January. Colonel Oka, commanding the 124th Infantry, is reported to have deserted his troops about 14 January. He and his staff left the command post

on the Matanikau and made their way to safety, and later sent orders to the Gifu defenders to evacuate and infiltrate through the American lines to the coast. (33) But Major Inagaki's starving troops in the Gifu elected to stay at their posts and fight to the end rather than desert their sick and wounded comrades. (34)

Colonel McClure then decided to attempt the double envelopment which he and General Collins had originally decided against. To tighten the noose around the Gifu, he decided to extend the 2d Battalion's lines from Hill 27 to Hill 42, thus closely encircling the strong point. E Company was to march northward around the American lines from Hill 27 to Hill 42, and by 17 January be ready to attack the Gifu from the rear (northwest) while troops on Hill 27 pushed north. (35) As a deep, tangled ravine northwest of Hill 27 would make movement too difficult to employ a whole company in that area, E Company had completely to circle the American lines at the Gifu before attacking. Colonel McClure requested that every available artillery piece be used against Gifu.



Psychological warfare was also employed by XIV Corps headquarters in an attempt to persuade the Japanese to surrender. Capt. John M. Burden of the Corps intelligence section, accompanied by intelligence officers of the 25th Division, set up a loud speaker on Hill 44 on the northern part of the Sea Horse on the afternoon of 15 January. Burden had intended to broadcast in Japanese at 1600, but a fire fight broke out between a part of the 35th Infantry and some of Oka's troops to the east. The broadcast was delayed until 1715, when Burden told the Japanese to send an officer to Hill 44 to arrange for the surrender. But it was too close to nightfall to expect results, and at 1815 the Japanese were told not to try to surrender until the next day.

At 0600 the next morning Burden repeated the first broadcast of the previous day. When two hours passed without a response from any Japanese officer, Burden broadcast again to urge the Japanese

soldiers to ignore their leaders and save their lives before being annihilated. Five emaciated prisoners were obtained in this area. They asserted, perhaps untruthfully, that neither they nor their fellow soldiers had any stomach for more fighting, but continued to resist because they feared that the Americans killed their prisoners. On the basis of this testimony, Captain Burden decided to make one more broadcast. (36)

The artillery had meanwhile been preparing for a heavy bombardment. A heavy artillery concentration to smother the Gifu was an essential prelude to a successful attack, for light mortar shells left the pillboxes undamaged, and there were not enough 81-mm. mortars to cover the entire area. During the first days of the operation the 64th Field Artillery Battalion, directly supporting the 35th Infantry, had fired little at the Gifu but had fired a few missions in support of the 27th Infantry, and a few counterbattery and harassing missions into Kokumbona. (37)

Prior to 10 January soldiers of the 64th had emplaced their 105-mm. howitzers in the vicinity of Hill 34, about 2,000 yards northeast of the Gifu. The proximity of this position to Wright Road somewhat simplified the movement of supplies. Two of the batteries occupied sharp, exposed hill crests, advantageous positions made tenable by the enemy's deficiencies in artillery and air power. Artillery problems on Guadalcanal were always complicated by the lack of accurate maps, but since American soldiers had ringed the Gifu it was possible to place observed fire in the pocket. Forward observers, who frequently encountered difficulty in locating their own positions in the jungles, often crawled so close to the enemy lines that their own fire fell within 100 yards of them. (38)

The artillery preparation requested by Colonel McClure was assigned by 25th Division artillery headquarters to the 105-mm. howitzers of the 88th Field Artillery Battalion, one 105-mm. howitzer of the 8th, and the 155-mm. howitzers of the 90th and 221st Field Artillery Battalions in addition to the 105-mm. howitzers of the 64th Field Artillery Battalion. Because the 64th was in a better position to control fire on the Gifu than division artillery headquarters, the 64th's fire direction center was to direct the fire. Direct wires from the 64th's fire direction center were to carry data to the fire direction centers of the 8th, 88th, and 90th Battalions. Data from the 64th would be transmitted to the 221st via the 25th Division Artillery fire direction center, where the 221st liaison officer was stationed.



On the morning of 17 January Captain Burden again attempted to persuade the Japanese to surrender. Broadcasting from G Company's line at the Gifu, he warned them of the impending bombardment and advised that they escape before the shelling began. The Japanese were assured that they would be permitted to enter the American lines even after the bombardment started. Burden then moved to Hill 27 to repeat the broadcast. But heavy rains fell during most of the period of the broadcast, and the volume of the loud-speaker was reduced. No one surrendered. One Japanese company is reported to have discussed the possibility of surrender but decided against it because most of the men were too ill to walk.

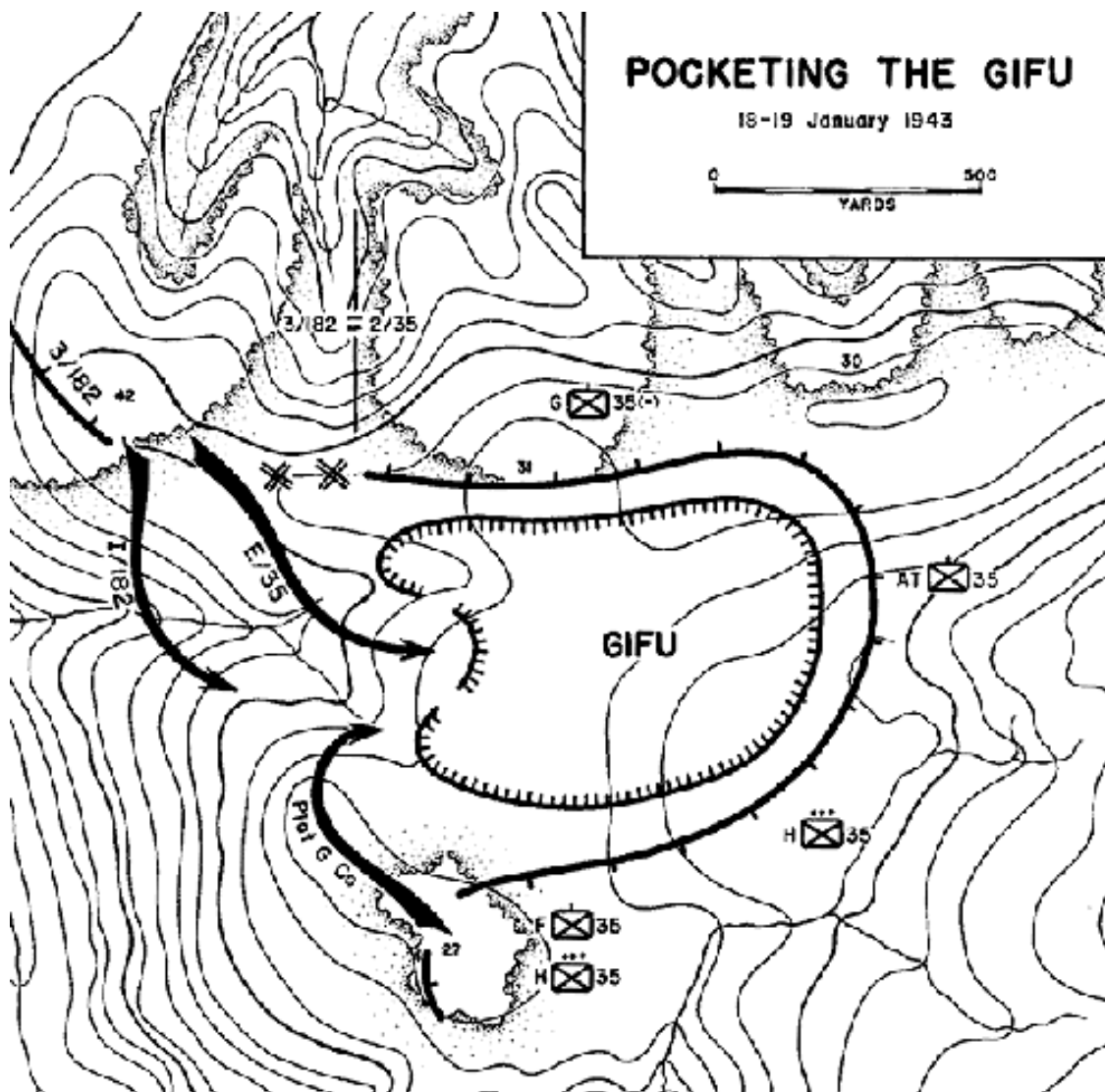
The artillery had planned to adjust its fire in the morning, but the broadcasts delayed the adjustment of the twenty-five 105-mm. and the twenty-four 155-mm. howitzers until noon.

At 1130 infantrymen of the 2d Battalion, 35th, were pulled back 300 yards to the rear. The forward observers remained out in front. The 35th's main line on Hill 31 lay less than 250 yards north of the Gifu line. The 64th Field Artillery Battalion's 105-mm. howitzers lay only 2,000 yards from the Gifu. Two thousand, eight hundred yards was the minimum range for high-angle fire listed in the firing tables in use at that time. The 155-mm. howitzers could not fire at quadrant elevations greater than 800 mils

(45 degrees). To hit the ravines inside the Gifu, all shells would have to be fired almost directly over Hill 31, with no margin of safety for clearing the hill. The known vertical probable error in

the angle of fall of the howitzer shells made it obvious that some would hit Hill 31 (39) It was therefore necessary to pull the infantrymen back to the south from Hill 31.

The artillery battalions began adjusting their fire on the Gifu at 1200 after the broadcast had ceased, but were interrupted frequently by calls of "cease fire," especially from infantrymen on Hill 42 who believed that the shells were falling short. The artillery battalions then adjusted each howitzer individually on the target, a slow task which took over two hours to complete. For ninety minutes, starting at 1430, the forty-nine howitzers fired for effect. They placed over 1,700 rounds in an area less than 1,000 yards square. The 2d Battalion's mortars fired into the most defiladed areas. The noise, concussion, and reverberation were tremendous, and the effect of the bombardment was doubtless great, for the Japanese prisoners captured during the next few days were nearly all shell-shocked. (40) But poor timing largely vitiated the effects of both the broadcasts and the shelling. After the bombardment the infantrymen moved forward and by 1630 had reoccupied their lines. They did not then assault because the approaching dusk would have made an attack over such terrain very risky. (41) The shock effect of the artillery was thus partially lost. (42) Colonel McClure did not repeat the bombardment the next morning because he did not wish to withdraw the infantry again. (43)



The double envelopment began the next day, 18 January. I Company of the 182d Infantry advanced 450 yards south from Hill 42 to make contact about 1700 with a platoon detached from G Company. The platoon had advanced northwest from Hill 27 through the ravine. (44)

While these two units were advancing, E Company, which had followed I Company of the 182d off Hill 42, swung to the left (east) to strike the Gifu from the west. The company knocked out three or four enemy machine guns and killed seven Japanese before wired-in machine guns halted it. (45) Meanwhile, to the right of E Company, the platoon from G Company had located two pillboxes on its front, one of which was knocked out after the platoon leader had given firing data to 81-mm. mortars.

The next day, 19 January, E Company resumed its attack, but a pillbox and machine-gun defense held it down. (Map 13) The Gifu, however, was beginning to crack. A 37-mm. antitank gun and an 81-mm. mortar hit one of the two pillboxes discovered in front of Hill 27 by an F Company patrol. G Company reported that it had definitely located twelve pillboxes on its front. E Company, which had begun its attack at 0800, reported at 1615 that it had killed six of the enemy, knocked out four machine guns, and located twelve machine-gun positions and pillboxes on a small ridge. One hour later the company reported that it had destroyed three more positions, but that nine wired-in pillboxes, from ten to twelve feet apart, held it back. Grenades failed to damage them, and E Company dug in for the night. (46)

Heavy rain, mud, and particularly poor visibility limited operations on 20 January and prevented the 2d Battalion from exploiting its successes immediately. One patrol penetrated 150 yards north from Hill 27, and another found three pillboxes northwest of Hill 27. Two were empty. The patrol leader and one automatic rifleman approached within ten feet of the occupied pillbox before they were observed. The patrol leader shot one Japanese, and the automatic rifleman shot two more who were trying to escape, but machine guns forced the two Americans to withdraw. That night several small groups of enemy soldiers failed in their efforts to escape from the pocket. Eleven Japanese were killed. (47)

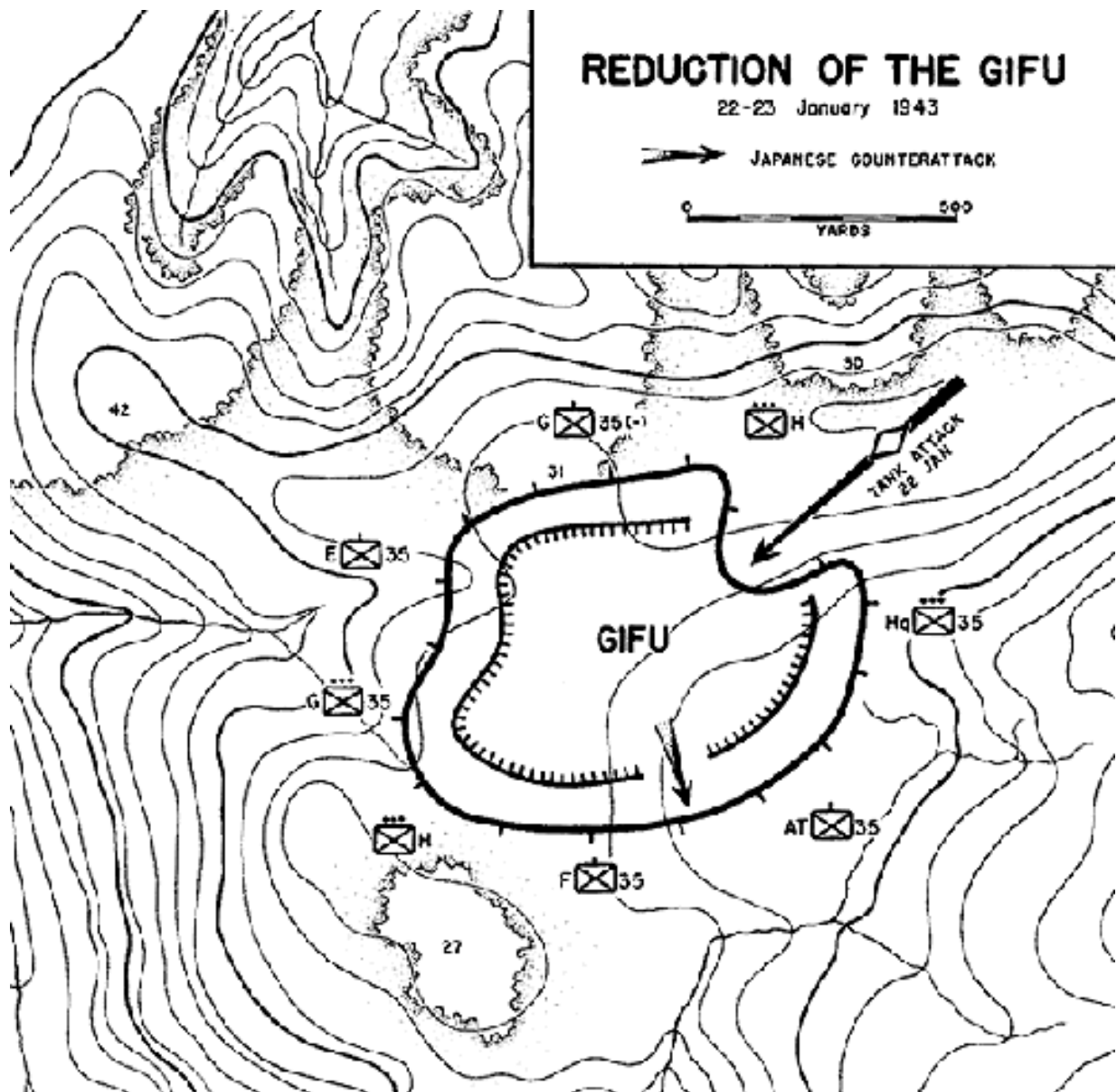
The Cracking of the Line

Tanks were made available to the 2d Battalion on 21 January, and the task of breaking the enemy lines was greatly simplified. Three Marine Corps light tanks, manned by soldiers from the 25th Division's Cavalry Reconnaissance Troop, started up the jeep trail toward Mount Austen's 1,514-foot crest. Two broke down, but the third reached the top. As the tank drew near the Gifu infantrymen fired mortars and machine guns to drown its sound, then cut down trees to permit the tank to approach the Japanese front lines.

Supported by sixteen infantrymen, the tank drove into the northeast part of the Gifu line, on G Company's left flank, at 1040 on 22 January. (Map 14) It pulled close to three pillboxes and destroyed them with 37-mm. high explosive shells, and shot the Japanese soldiers with canister and machine guns. Turning left (south), the tank broke out through the east end of the Gifu. At 1500 it made one more attack against the north side of the Gifu and destroyed five more pillboxes. The infantrymen then moved forward before dark to occupy the gap. That same day E Company, on the west, was again held in place by the pillboxes on its front. One platoon attempted to outflank them in the afternoon, but darkness fell before it could complete its move. But the tank, in a few hours, had torn a 200-yard hole in the line which had withstood infantry assaults for a month.

The Gifu area remained quiet until 0230 on the night of 22-23 January, when about 100 Japanese soldiers led by Major Inagaki rushed the sector held by F Company and the Antitank Company. Inagaki's desperate men used grenades, small arms, and automatic weapons. The American companies immediately opened fire and easily broke up the attack. When day broke the Americans found 85 dead bodies in front of the two companies, including those of Inagaki, one other major, 8 captains, and 15 lieutenants. (48) Inagaki had directed his attack against

pillboxes on the strongest part of the 2d Battalion's line. Had he attacked southwest against the G Company platoon northwest of Hill 27, his chances of success might have been greater, since each 15 yards of line was held by only two men. (49)



As the XIV Corps had already begun the second phase of the January offensives, Colonel McClure ordered the 2d Battalion to clear the remnants out of the Gifu on 23 January. The tank attacks, the success of the enveloping companies, the effect of the artillery, Inagaki's desperate attempt, and the demoralized state of the few prisoners captured had convinced Colonel Larsen that the Gifu could no longer offer serious resistance. He put his battalion in skirmish line and advanced. There was almost no fighting; the enemy survivors were trying to hide, not to fight. The only American injured was one private who was shot through the shoulder by a Japanese officer. By nightfall Colonel Larsen's battalion had cleared the Gifu. (50) Mount Austen was free of the enemy.

The reduction of the Gifu had cost the 2d Battalion 64 men killed and 42 wounded. (51) The battalion reported that it had killed 518 Japanese and had captured 40 machine guns, 12 mortars, 200 rifles, and 38 sabers. The Gifu garrison had been almost completely wiped out. Colonel McClure reported that the 35th Infantry in its operations on Mount Austen and the Sea

Horse had killed almost 1,100 of the enemy, and had captured 29 prisoners, 88 light and heavy machine guns, 678 rifles, 79 pistols, plus a quantity of ammunition. (52)



The destruction of the determined defenders of the Gifu strong point had engaged five battalions of infantry, and lasted over one month. Finally the last effective enemy force east of the Matanikau River had been wiped out, and the 35th Infantry became the reserve of the 25th Division, which was then advancing rapidly to the west.

The first January offensive by the XIV Corps had gained about 3,000 yards of ground. The western line, running from the coast west of Point Cruz inland to the southwest Matanikau fork, had been firmly established. The south flank, extending east to Mount Austen, was now secure. In the opinion of the Corps commander, the 25th Division had performed brilliantly. (53)

GUADALCANAL 1942-1943

For its gallantry in driving the Japanese off of Mount Austin, the 35th Infantry Regiment was awarded a Presidential Unit Citation Streamer embroidered Guadalcanal. The first awarded to a unit of the 25th Infantry Division. For the remainder of the

Guadalcanal campaign the 35th Infantry Regiment served as the division reserve.

After the capture of Guadalcanal the 25th Division, also now known as Tropic Lightning for how swiftly it accomplished its missions, spent the spring and summer of 1943 in defending the island against possible Japanese attacks and improving the facilities as a base for future operations.

1. 25th Div Opns, p. 69.
2. Ibid., p. 73.
3. 0800 is the time shown in 25th Div Opn Overlays, 0600, 10 Jan-0600, 11 Jan. 43.
4. 25th Div Opn Overlay 10-11 Jan 43, and General Collins' statement in 25th Div Opns, p. 100.
5. Ltr, Lt Col William J. Mullen to author, (no sub), 24 Feb 48; interns with Col Larsen and Lt Col James B. Leer, 20 Oct 47.
6. WD GO No. 28, 5 Jan 43.
7. 35th Inf Journal, 10 Jan 43, in misc docs from USAFISPA.
8. 25th Div Opns, p. 71; interns with Cols Larsen and Leer.
9. 35th Inf Journal, 11 Jan 43.
10. 25th Div G-2 Journal, 11 Jan 43.
11. 25th Div Opns, pp. 71, 76.
12. Guadalcanal and the Thirteenth Air Force, p. 154.
13. 25th Div Opn Overlay, 11-12 Jan 43.
14. 25th Div Opns, p. 77.

15. 64th FA Bn Hist, Jan-Jun 43, p. 3.
16. 25th Div Opns, pp. 72, 77.
17. 35th Inf Journal, 18 Jan 43; 25th Div Opns, p. 77.
18. Rpt, CO 35th Inf to CG 25th Div. 27 Jan 43, in 25th Div FO's in misc does from USAFISPA.
19. Interv with Lt Gen J. Lawton Collins (former CG, 25th Div), 5 Dec 46.
20. 25th Div Opns, p. 79.
21. Ibid., p. 80.
22. General Collins' statement in With Div Opns, p. 102.
23. 25th Div Opns, pp. 80, 102; CO, 35th Inf, states that tanks were first requested on 12 January. See *ibid.*, p. 87.
24. 3d Bn, 182d Inf, Opn Rpt, 9 Dec 42-7 Apr 43, p. 3; 182d Inf S-2 Journals, 9-11 Jan 43.
25. 35th Inf Journal, 11 Jan 43.
26. 25th Div Opns, p. 81.
27. 3d Bn, 182d Inf, Opn Rpt, p. 4; 182d Inf, S-2 Journal, 14 Jan 43. The S-2 Journal concludes that the Japanese left (northwest) flank extended to the Matanikau.
28. 35th Inf Journal, 15 Jan 43. On 15 January, the 2d Marine Division also used flame throwers on the beach, but with greater success. The 35th Infantry ceased to use them because it was believed they needlessly exposed the operators. Interv with Cal. Larsen.
29. 35th Inf Journal, 15 Jan 43; 25th Div Opns, p. 81, states that the gap developed between the Antitank and G Companies. At the time neither company was moving, according to 35th Infantry Journal, and there is no record of an enemy counterattack on 15 January.
30. Interv with Col Larsen.
31. Intervs with Gen Collins and Col Larsen.
32. 25th Div Opus, p. 83; interv with Col Larsen. When interviewed Colonel Larsen volunteered the information that he had employed Colonel Peters' original plan in reducing the Gifu, i.e., heavy artillery bombardment and tank attack.
33. Amer Div Int Rpt, Tab A; XIV Corps, Enemy Opus, p. 6. Ito, when interrogated by Sebree at Rabaul in 1946, claimed that Oka did not desert his post but was killed on Mount Austen. Interv with Gen Sebree. Ito may have been attempting to uphold the honor of the Imperial Army by trying to conceal Oka's defection. It will be noted that Oka's operations in October were sometimes hesitant and tardy.
34. XIV Corps, Enemy Opns, 18th Div Hist, p. 5; Amer Div Int Rpt, Tab A.
35. 25th Div Opns, p. 83.
36. Capt Burden's Rpt to ACofS G-2, XIV Corps, 19 Jan 43, sub: Rpt Broadcast Propaganda, in Amer Div G-2 Journal, 16-25 Jan 43.
37. 64th FA Bn Hist, p. 2; 25th Div Opns, p. 90. (These accounts are identical.)
38. 64th PA Bn Hist, p. 2.
39. Ibid., pp. 4-5, asserts that the Cannon Company might have been profitably employed on Hill 42, and that the artillery battalion commander "missed a bet" by not placing some 105-mm. howitzers on Hill 42 for direct fire.
40. 25th Div Opns, p. 84.
41. Ibid., p. 94.
42. Colonel McClure disapproved of the broadcasts. 35th Div Opns, p. 87. General Collins pointed out (p. 103) the necessity for capturing prisoners. XIV Corps, Enemy Opns, 38th Div Hist, p. 3, states that the broadcasts were effective, for of the 248 prisoners taken later, 118 came from the 124th and 228th Infantry Regiments, the units toward which the broadcasts were directed.
43. Interv with Lt Col Thomas J. Badger (former S-3, 64th FA Bn), 6 Dec 46.
44. 3d Bn, 182d Inf, Opn Rpt, p. 4; 25th Div Opns, p. 84.
45. 35th Inf S-2 Rpt, 18 Jan 43. This was the first enemy barbed wire encountered in that area. XIV Corps G-2 Summary, 20 Jan 43.
46. 35th Inf Periodic Rpt, 20 Jan 43; 35th Inf Journal, 19 Jan 43.

47. 25th Div Opns, p. 85.
48. Amer Div Int Rpt, Tab A; 25th Div Opus, p. 86.
49. Interv with Col Larsen.
50. Ibid.
51. 25th Div Opns, p. 88.
52. Rpt, CO, 35th Inf to CG, 25th Div. 25th Division Operations lists 431 Japanese killed. Colonel McClure's report includes those killed by artillery fire.
53. Rad, CG Cactus to COMSOPAC, 0507 of 14 Jan 43, in USAFISPA G-3 Worksheet File 1-15 Jan 43. General Patch, in XIV Corps GO No. 52, 7 Mar 43, cited the 25th Division for "outstanding performance of duty" from 10 January to 9 February 1943. He recommended that the Division be cited in War Department General Orders, and COMGENSOPAC concurred, but the recommendation was not approved. See ltr, CG XIV Corps to TAG, 7 Mar 43, sub: Recommendation of Citation of 25th Inf. Div. WPD 210.54 (3-1-42) [sic] in HRS DRB AGO. <http://www.ehistory.com/world/library/books/wwii/greenbooks/quadalcanal/0306.cfm>