





## Foreword

This record was compiled by the former staff officer of the 28th Army, ex-Col. Aiichi Okamura, during his internment in Burma after the termination of the war and was reviewed by ex-Lt. Gen. Shozo Sakurai, former commander of the 28th Army. After the record was received by the Information and Historical Record Division, Japanese Demobilization Bureau, it was subject to some correction by ex-Maj. Nizo Yamaguchi, former staff officer of the Southern Area Army and presently a member of the above-mentioned Division.

This record is based on the documents which were available at the former Army headquarters just after the termination of the war, and on the recollections of former staff officers of the 28th Army, ex-Lt. Col. Eiichi Tsuchiya, ex-Majors Masakatsu Okudaira, Tatsuru Yamaguchi and all former department chiefs of the Army headquarters and commanders of units under the command of the Army.

29 August 1952.

## Revised Edition

Many former officers of the Japanese 28th Army were of assistance to the Foreign Histories Division in filling in the gaps and correcting the inaccuracies in the original manuscript. We acknowledge our indebtedness and express our thanks to the following:

Lt. Gen. Hanaya, Commanding General, 55th Division  
Maj. Gen. Koba, Commanding General, 54th Infantry Group  
Maj. Gen. Yamamoto, Commanding General, 72d Mixed Brigade  
Col. Kawamura, Chief of Staff, 55th Division  
Col. Furuya, Commanding Officer, 112th Infantry Regiment  
Col. Yoshida, Commanding Officer, 144th Infantry Regiment  
Lt. Col. Saito, Staff Officer, 54th Division  
Maj. Tsujimoto, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion,  
143d Infantry Regiment  
Maj. Matsuo, Commanding Officer, 2d Battalion,  
143d Infantry Regiment  
Maj. Kurooka, Commanding Officer, 3d Battalion,  
143d Infantry Regiment  
Maj. Yamanaka, Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion,  
29th Infantry Regiment

We are also indebted to Mr. Nishiura, Chief of the War Histories Section, Army Staff College, Japanese Self Defense Force, for his assistance to this division in making official records available, in particular: The Memories of Lt. Gen. Sakurai (CG, 28th Army); Diary of Maj. Gen. Sakurai (CG, 55th Infantry Group); Operations Report of the 28th Army, by Lt. Col. Tsuchiya and Maj. Fukutomi (Staff Officers of the 28th Army) and the Operations Report of the 54th Division. Casualty lists were furnished by the 1st Demobilization Bureau of the Ministry of Public Welfare.

30 April 1958.

## Preface

Through Instructions No. 126 to the Japanese Government, 12 October 1945, subject: "Institution for War Records Investigation," steps were initiated to exploit military historical records and official reports of the Japanese War Ministry and Japanese General Staff. Upon dissolution of the War Ministry and the Japanese General Staff, and the transfer of their former functions to the Demobilization Bureau, research and compilation continued and developed into a series of historical monographs.

The paucity of original orders, plans and unit journals, which are normally essential in the preparations of this type of record, most of which were lost or destroyed during field operations or bombing raids, rendered the task of compilation most difficult; particularly distressing has been the complete lack of official strength reports, normal in AG or G3 records. However, while many of the important orders, plans and estimates have been reconstructed from memory and therefore are not textually identical with the originals, they are believed to be generally accurate and reliable.

Under the supervision of the Demobilization Bureau, the basic material contained in this monograph was compiled and written in Japanese by former officers, on duty in command and staff units within major units during the period of operations. Translation was effected through the facilities of Allied Translator and Interpreters Service, G2, General Headquarters, Far East Command.

This Japanese Operational Monograph was rewritten in English by the Japanese Research Division, Military History Section, General Headquarters, Far East Command and is based on the translation of the Japanese original. Editorial corrections were limited to those necessary for coherence and accuracy.

29 August 1952.

## Revised Edition

This monograph, originally edited in August 1952, was completely revised in 1958. The original edition, which was developed from fragmentary records and recollections, failed to present the various operations in proper relationship to each other. This lack of cohesion made it virtually impossible to gain an understanding of the

over-all operational situation in Burma. During the five and one-half years that elapsed between the publication of the two editions, a tremendous amount of additional information became available, making it possible to rectify the many errors of omission and commission in the original. Map coverage has also been expanded and improved.

The rewriting and editing of the revised monograph was accomplished by the Foreign Histories Division, Office of the Military History Officer, Headquarters United States Army Japan, successor to the original editing agency. Research and compilation of data for the revised edition was performed by former Lt. Col. M. Iwata, now a Senior Military Operational Analyst with the Foreign Histories Division.

30 April 1958.

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## CHAPTER 1

### THE HA-GO OPERATION

#### Situation in Late 1943

Since the end of the 1943 monsoon season, the war situation in Burma had become increasingly acute and by September the enemy was building up strength on all sides.

In the Akyab sector, in western Burma, the British-Indian 5th and 7th Divisions were disposed in depth on the Buthidaung-Maungdaw front, with two or three additional divisions backing them up. There were signs of preparations for an offensive in the near future. Enemy vessels massed in Chittagong Harbor, the Naf River and other points, combined with increased enemy ship movements, were believed to be indications of a possible amphibious attack on Akyab.

In Assam Province, Imphal and vicinity was the base of enemy operations and the British-Indian 17th, 20th and 23d Divisions as well as one other division were advancing to this sector. The enemy was rebuilding the Imphal-Palel-Tamu road and the Imphal-Churachandpur-Tiddim road into motor vehicle roads.

At the northern end of the Hukawng Valley the New 1st Army of the Chungking Army and a U. S. brigade, both commanded by Gen. Joseph E. Stilwell, were located in the vicinity of Ledo. The

New 1st Army was greatly superior to other Chinese armies in organization, equipment and training. Here, too, indications of preparations for an offensive could be observed.

In the Yunnan area of northeastern Burma, approximately ten divisions of the Yunnan Expeditionary Army (Chin<sup>ese</sup>) had occupied positions along the east bank of the Salween River, west of Tali. While preparations for an offensive were not being energetically pushed in this area, it was estimated that the Army would be prepared to launch an offensive in cooperation with any offensive launched by the British-Indian forces and Stilwell's force.

#### The U-Go (Imphal) Operation Planned

On 7 August the Southern Army directed the Burma Area Army to make preparations for an offensive against eastern India. After a study of the enemy situation, the Area Army commander determined to conduct only holding operations against the Yunnan Expeditionary Army in the Salween River area and against Stilwell's force in the Hukawng Valley sector. The main offensive against eastern India would be undertaken by the 15th Army with the 15th, 31st and 33d Divisions. On 12 August the Burma Area Army issued

orders to the 15th Army to start preparations for the U-Go (Imphal)  
Operation to be conducted in early 1944.<sup>1</sup>

### Ha-Go Operation Plans

As a diversionary action, the Area Army planned the Ha-Go Operation, an offensive to be launched in the Arakan sector by 55th Division units, two or three weeks prior to the start of the U-Go Operations.

In November 1943, Lt. Gen. Hanaya was designated as commander of the 55th Division and, in preparation for the forthcoming offensive, immediately proceeded to make plans and effect troop dispositions (Map No. 1):

Maungdaw-Buthidaung Front.....	55th Inf Gp Hq 143d Inf Regt
West Coast (From Donbaik to the mouth of the Naf River).....	112th Inf Regt (less 1st Bn)
Akyab Area.....	55th Recon Regt 1st Bn, 112th Inf Regt
Kaladan River Front.....	1st Bn, 213th Inf Regt

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1. See Japanese Monograph No. 134 (Revised) for detailed description of the Imphal Operation.



A force composed of the 144th Infantry Regiment, the 1st Battalion of the 55th Mountain Artillery Regiment and one engineer company, which had been rehabilitated at Rabaul after engaging in the New Guinea campaign as the South Seas Detachment, reverted to 55th Division control and arrived during December and January. In addition, the 111th Infantry Regiment (less the 2d and 3d Battalions) and the 2d Battalion, 54th Field Artillery Regiment, were transferred from the 54th Division, in mid-January, to reinforce Akyab during the Ha-Go Operation.

The Division commander's plan called for the launching of an attack against the enemy's base of operations at Bawli Bazar. The main attack would be aimed at destroying the British-Indian 7th Division, in the area east of the Mayu Range, with a pincer movement launched simultaneously from the north and south. Then, by shifting the main body of the Division to the vicinity of Ngangyaung, they would crush the enemy 5th Division in the Maungdaw area, west of the Mayu Range. This phase of the Ha-Go Operation is generally known as the Northern Arakan Operation as distinguished from the Kaladan Operation which was a subsequent development of the Ha-Go Operation.

### Activation of the 28th Army

In consideration of the war situation in late 1943, Imperial General Headquarters had determined to conduct counteroffensives in China and Burma. The Yunnan-Kwangsi offensive was to be launched in China to destroy American air bases and the eastern India offensive would be launched from northwestern Burma to strengthen the Japanese defensive position.

There were obvious indications of possible sea and land offensives by the enemy, including the naval bombardment of Ramree Island in December 1943. If the Burma Area Army was to be committed to operations against eastern India a strong defensive force would be necessary to hold southwestern Burma. Accordingly, on 15 January 1944, the order of battle of the 28th Army was announced (See Tables 1 and 2).

Lt. Gen. Shozo Sakurai had been announced as 28th Army commander on 7 January 1944. He had taken part in the original Burma campaign in 1942 as commander of the 33d Division and since March 1943, had been commander of the Army Mechanized Headquarters in Tokyo. Maj. Gen. Hideo Iwakuro was designated as chief of staff, being relieved from his position as chief of the General Affairs Department, Military Administration Office, 25th Army (Sumatra).

The chief of staff was sent to Rangoon on 18 January to expedite the organization of the Army headquarters and on 21 January the Army commander arrived. Although the staff was composed

primarily of personnel already in Burma, a few key members were transferred from other areas and by 30 January the organization of the headquarters was complete.

The code name "Saku Group" was given to the army and for purposes of keeping its identity secret, the name "Saku Unit" continued to be used. This ruse appeared to be successful as the enemy apparently identified the newly formed 28th Army as being a mixed brigade which had advanced north from Malaya.

Table 1

Organization and Order of Battle of the

28th Army

Hq. 28th Army, Lt. Gen. Shozo Sakurai, Commander  
Maj. Gen. Hideo Iwakuro, C/S

2d Division - Lt. Gen. Seizaburo Okazaki, Commander  
Col. Takeo Kinoshita, C/S

54th Division - Lt. Gen. Shihachi Katamura, Commander  
Col. Jiro Itta, C/S

55th Division - Lt. Gen. Tadashi Hanaya, Commander  
Col. Benji Kawamura, C/S

14th Independent Antitank Gun Battalion - Maj. Nanao Nakao, Cmdr.  
(Hq, 3 cos and Ammo Tn)

71st Field Antiaircraft Artillery Battalion - Maj. Teiichi Ota, Cmdr.  
(Hq and 3 btrys)

44th Field Antiaircraft MG Company - Unk

20th Field Road Construction Unit - Lt. Col. Akuta  
(200 men)

101st Field Road Construction Unit - Capt. Hiromitsu Matsumoto  
(Hq and 3 cos - 16 Off and 321 EM)

51st Independent Transport Battalion - Maj. Sadaji Inoue  
(Six cos - horse-drawn)

55th Independent Motor Transport Battalion - Maj. Takaziro Ryu  
(Four cos - 50 trucks each - 1 materiel depot)

236th Independent Motor Transport Company - 1st Lt. Shutaro Katsuta

10th Provisional Motor Transport Company - Unk.

26th Ponton Bridge Company - Capt. Kazushige Kuwabara

10th River Crossing Materiel Company - Capt. Torao Fujioka

70th Casualty Clearing Platoon - 1st Lt. Masajiro Tsunabuchi

71st Casualty Clearing Platoon - 1st Lt. Jitsuji Sugimoto

118th Rear Hospital - Maj. Rokuro Kasahara



Table 2

Units Under Tactical Command  
of the 28th Army

11th Shipping Group - Maj. Gen. Gisaburo Suzuki, Commander

11th Shipping Engineer Regiment\* - Lt. Col. Takashi Ishimura

3d Sea Transport Battalion

22d Provisional Water Transport Service Company

38th Water Transport Service Company

Southwestern Branch, Burma Area Army Field Provision Depot

Southwestern Branch, Burma Area Army Field Ordnance Depot

Southwestern Branch, Burma Area Army Field Motor Depot

Southwestern Branch, 21st Rear Veterinary Hospital

Elements of the 106th Rear Hospital

101st Carpenter Company

93d Land Transport Service Company

Elements of the 22d Field Water Supply Purification Unit

\* The 11th Shipping Engineer Regiment was composed of Hq, 3 companies and 1 materiel depot with a total of 1105 men and the following vessels:

Large landing barges.....	85
Small landing barges.....	54
Motored sampans.....	47
Armored boats.....	2
Fishing boats (60 Ton Class).....	10
Messenger boat.....	1
Speed boat.....	1

### Disposition of 28th Army Units - Early 1944

The zone of responsibility assigned the 28th Army was southwestern Burma, from Rangoon north to Maungdaw along the west coast and extending inland to the Arakan and Pegu Mountain Ranges. At the time of its organization the only portion of the Army's front actually facing the enemy was a 50 mile strip from Maungdaw northeast to Thayettabin. Along the Bay of Bengal it was responsible for a coastal front of 400 miles which, with the many islands adjacent to the coast, was vulnerable to an enemy seaborne attack. The Arakan Mountains, however, offered protection against attack from the northeast. Also within the operational area of the Army was the Irrawaddy Delta, one of the world's great rice producing centers.

Since the First Arakan Operation, the 55th Division had been facing the enemy on the front north of Akyab, with its main strength deployed on the Mayu Peninsula and some units in the Kaladan River Basin. The 54th Division had been assigned the defense of the long coastal strip extending from Ruywa south to the mouths of the Irrawaddy River since the latter part of 1943. The 2d Division had been in the process of moving from Malaya to Burma since the 1st of January 1944. The 11th Shipping Group was stationed at Taungup with the principal supply depots being located at Prome. At the time of the activation of the 28th Army, the 54th and 55th Divisions were in position and by the end of February the main force of the 2d Division had arrived in southwestern Burma. Since the 28th Army did not wish to disturb the



status quo by making radical and sudden changes, a gradual redistribution of troops to conform with the Army's tactical and strategic plans was effected (Map No. 2).

One of the highest priority projects on the Army's agenda was the construction of defense positions and no effort was spared in rushing them to completion. As neither cement nor steel were available locally or through supply channels, defense positions consisted primarily of crude earthworks. Since there was no radar and only limited assistance could be expected from naval and air units, the army was forced to rely on sentries posted along the coast for production of intelligence on enemy activities and movements.

With some revisions, the commander of the 28th Army approved the 55th Division plans for the launching of the Northern Arakan Operation. In view of the enemy's numerically superior strength, he felt it would be extremely hazardous for the main body of the Division to effect a penetration as far as Bawli Bazar. Further, in the event that the operation did not progress as expected, the Division might encounter difficulties that would prejudice the over-all operations of the 28th Army. Accordingly, the Army commander established a line running east and west through Taung Bazar as the northern limits of the operation. Any advance north of that line would be subject to his prior approval. With these revisions the commander ordered the operation to commence any time on or after 4 February.

In mid-January the 55th Division had begun regrouping for the offensive: the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment was moved to the Kaladan Valley to replace the 1st Battalion of the 213th Infantry Regiment; the 144th Infantry Regiment (less the 3d Battalion) was dispatched to the west coast to replace the 112th Infantry and the main combat elements of the Division began assembling at Kindaung as the assault column. Preparations were well in hand to start the offensive about the middle of February. (Map No. 1)

#### Task Force Organization

The 55th Division was divided into several Task Force Units to perform the various actions required by the Ha-Go Operation plan:

Sakurai Unit - Commander, Maj. Gen. T. Sakurai\*  
CG, 55th Inf Gp

Hq. 55th Inf Gp  
112th Inf Regt (less 1 rifle co and 1 MG plat)  
2d Bn, 143d Inf Regt (less 5th Co and 1 MG plat)  
1st Bn, 213th Inf Regt (less 1st and 3d Cos and  
1 MG plat)  
3d Bn, 55th Mt Arty Regt (4 mt guns and 4 mortars)  
55th Engr Regt (less 1½ cos)  
One plat, 10th River Crossing Material Co  
One squad, Armorer Unit  
Med Bn (less elms)  
One wireless squad, Div Sig Unit  
One plat, Water Sup Unit

\* Not to be confused with Lt. Gen. S. Sakurai, CG, 28th Army.

Doi Unit - Commander, Col. Doi  
CO, 143d Inf Regt

143d Inf Regt (less 2d Bn)  
4th Mt Btry (2 mt guns)  
One plat, 55th Engr Regt  
One sect, Med Bn  
One squad, Water Sup Unit

Yoshida Unit - Commander, Col. Yoshida  
CO, 144th Inf Regt

144th Inf Regt (less 2d and 3d Bns)  
14 AT Bn (less 3d Btry) (8 AT Guns - 37-mm)  
3d Co, 55th Recon Regt (1t tanks)  
1st Bn, 55th Mt Arty (3 mt guns)  
Comp btry (5 mt guns and 1 fld gun)  
One sect, Med Bn  
One squad, Water Sup Unit

Kawashima Unit - Commander, Col. Kawashima  
CO, 55th Recon Regt

55th Recon Regt (less 3d Co)

Koba Unit - Commander, Col. Koba  
CO, 111th Inf Regt

111th Inf Regt (less 2d and 3d Bns)  
3d Bn, 144th Inf Regt  
2d Bn, 54th Fld Arty

Division Reserve

2d Bn, 144th Inf Regt

Artillery - Commander, Lt. Col. Kobayashi  
CO, 55th Mt Arty Regt

55th Mt Arty Regt (less 1st and 3d Bns) (5 mt guns)  
2d Btry, 3d Hvy Fld Arty Regt (3 How - 149-mm)

Transport - Commander, Col. Sei  
CO, 55th Trans Regt

55th Trans Regt (less 3d Co)  
3d Co, 11th Shipping Engr Regt

1st and 2d Cos, 51st Trans Bn  
26th Ponton Co  
22d Water Trans Sv Co (Prov)  
One plat, 10th River Crossing Material Co  
Sea Trans Co

Division Troops

Div Sig Unit (less 1 Wireless Squad)  
Amorer Unit (less 1 Squad)  
Water Sup Unit (less elms)  
1st, 2d and 4th Fld Hosps  
Vet Hosp  
One Plat, 101st Carp Co  
3d Co and 1 MG Plat, 213th Inf Regt

British Offensive - January 1944

On 18 January the British-Indian 7th Division took the initiative and launched an attack on the main 55th Division position between Letwedet and Htindaw. The 9th Company, 143d Infantry Regiment, defending the hill immediately east of Htindaw, stood firm against repeated attacks for several days, holding the hill until 24 January. During the last week in January the British-Indian 5th Division made severe, but unsuccessful, attacks on the 1st Battalion of the 143d Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of Razabil, west of the Mayu Range. In view of this increased enemy activity, the Division commander determined to advance the starting date of the Ha-Go Operation.

Ha-Go Operation Orders

Since the 28th Army had already approved the initiating of the Ha-Go Operation as early as 4 February, on 1 February, Lt. Gen. Hanaya,

CG, 55th Division, issued orders assigning missions to the Task Force Units and directing the start of the operation on 4 February.

In brief, the Division order directed the following actions by the Task Force Units:

1. Sakurai Unit will pierce the enemy line on the east bank of the Kalapanzin River, penetrate into Taung Bazar and destroy the enemy in that area. It will then attack, from the rear, the enemy west of the Kalapanzin River and completely destroy all enemy units in the area north of Buthidaung. A detachment will be sent to the area south of Ngangyaung, west of the Mayu Range, to make preparations for an offensive in that locality. Another detachment will be detailed to guard against a possible enemy advance from the direction of Goppe Bazar. The unit assigned to hold the present line will, under the direction of Division headquarters, employ deceptive tactics to divert the enemy's attention from the flanking movement.

2. Doi Unit will remain approximately in its present positions and stand firmly against the enemy. As the Sakurai Unit debouches to the right bank of the Kalapanzin River, the Doi Unit will seize every opportunity to take the offensive and destroy the enemy to its immediate front in order to cooperate with the Sakurai Unit. On the night of 3 February the Doi Unit will dispatch parties to raid enemy headquarters and generally throw the enemy rear into confusion. The unit will also close the Ngakyedauk Pass and carry out other appropriate diversionary tactics. During the fighting to the east of the Mayu Range the Doi Unit will facilitate the main offensive by containing the enemy to its front as well as keeping the enemy occupied in the area west of the Mayu Range.

3. Kawashima Unit will protect the right flank of the Division by checking the advance of the enemy in the Kaladan Valley.



4. Yoshida Unit will continue to defend the west coast from the mouth of the Naf River to Foul Point.

5. Koba Unit will defend Akyab and the Boronga Islands.

6. Artillery Group will directly support the Doi Unit. It will furnish a group specifically organized and trained to utilize enemy weapons to accompany the Sakurai Unit.

7. Division Signal Unit will establish a signal center at Seinyinbya on 3 February and will maintain communications between the Division command post and the headquarters of all Task Force Units. Radio silence will be maintained until 0400 on 4 February.

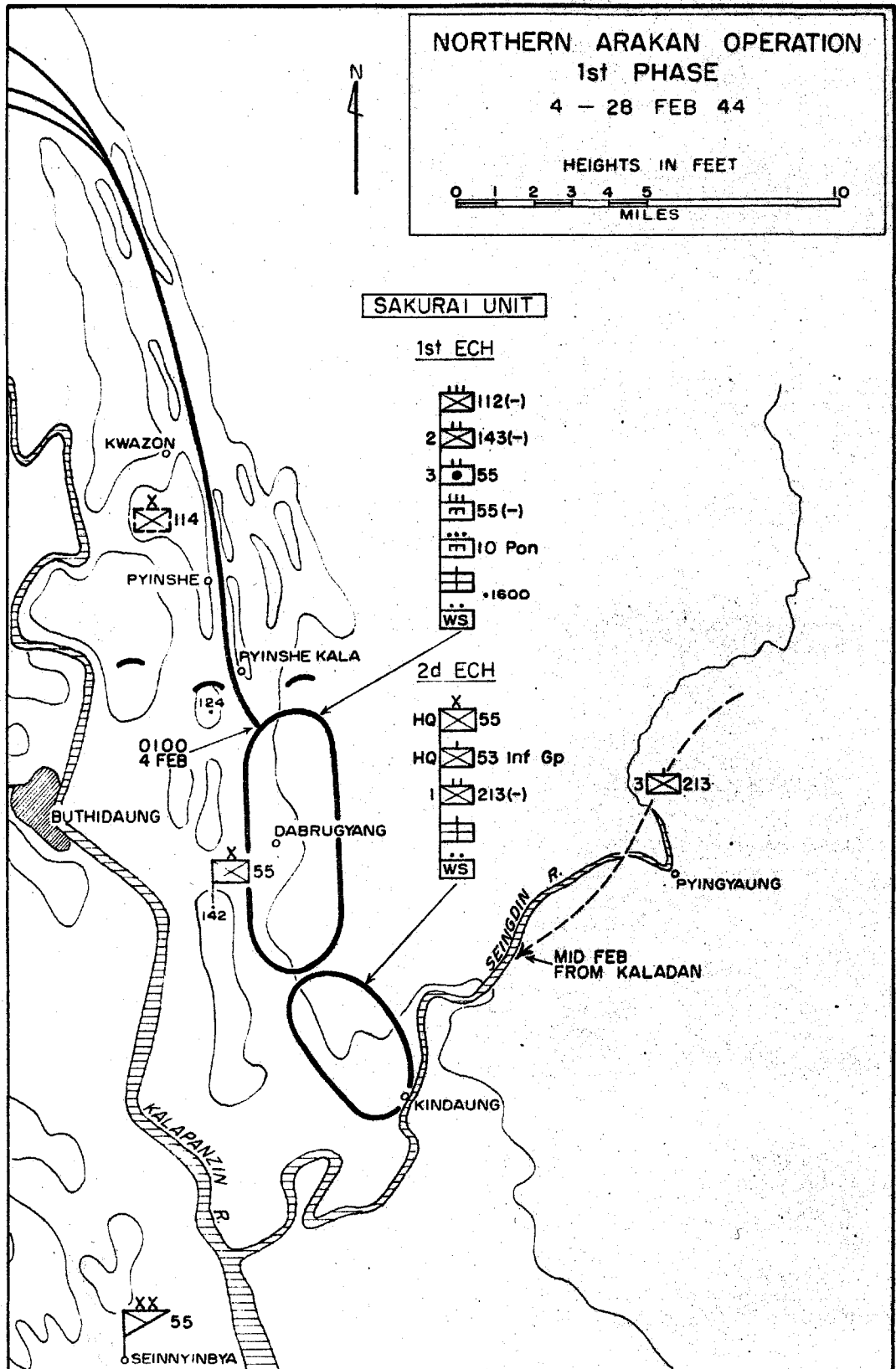
8. Division Reserve will remain in its present location, southwest of Buthidaung. Separate orders will be issued for subsequent moves.

#### The Northern Arakan Operation - First Phase

Maj. Gen. Sakurai divided his units, with a total of approximately 4,300 men, into two echelons. The 1st Echelon consisted of the 112th Infantry Regiment; the 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry and the 55th Engineer Regiment under the command of Col. Tanabashi. The 2d Echelon, directly under the command of General Sakurai was formed from the balance of the Sakurai Unit (Map No. 3a and b).

The 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry Regiment, acting as the advance guard, departed Hill 124 at 0100 on 4 February employing some disloyal British-Indian troops as guides. In order to shorten column length, each battalion of the main body advanced with a six-





teen man column front. Proceeding northward through the narrow valley between Pyinshe Kala and Pyinshe and disregarding sporadic enemy fire, the Unit succeeded in breaking through gaps in the enemy lines. Although the main force of the 1st Echelon was delayed by some confusion, the advance guard surprised the Taung Bazar garrison at 0700. Without delay, the Battalion crossed the Kalapanzin River south of Taung Bazar, using captured boats, and was followed closely by the 2d Echelon and the 3d Battalion of the 112th Infantry Regiment. The main body of the 1st Echelon crossed the river northwest of Taung Bazar on the morning of the 5th.

#### Southward Drive of the Sakurai Unit

With all units across the river, General Sakurai issued orders for their further advance. The 1st Battalion, 213th Infantry would advance toward Ngangyaung to cut the Bawli Bazar-Maungdaw Road and deny its use to the enemy as long as possible. Col. Tanabashi, commanding the 1st Echelon, was directed to send the 1st Battalion, 112th Infantry through Preingyaung to seize and hold the Ngakyedauk Pass and with the rest of the 112th Infantry Regiment to advance on Hill 315, northwest of Sinzweya. The 2d Battalion, 143d Infantry, on the left of the 112th Infantry Regiment, would move south toward Awlanbyin. General Sakurai with his headquarters and the 55th Engineer Regiment proposed to follow the 2d Battalion of the 143d toward Awlanbyin.

On the morning of the 6th, the 112th Regiment reached the sector north of Sinzweya and overran the headquarters of the British-Indian 7th Division while the 1st Battalion cut the Ngakyedauk Pass.<sup>2</sup> In position to envelop the enemy in Sinzweya, Col. Tanabashi disregarded the vital necessity for speed and delayed for 24 hours, giving the British time to establish a perimeter defense in the Sinzweya Basin. The British-Indian force of about 3,000 men, equipped with many tanks, artillery pieces and several hundred motor vehicles, resisted desperately and was successful in repulsing the Japanese attack. Their success in withstanding the Japanese attack bolstered the morale of the British troops and had the effect of shaking that of the 112th Infantry.

Meanwhile, on the 4th, the 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry encountered the enemy near Ingyang and was involved in an engagement southwest of the village for the following two days. Failing to make contact with General Sakurai, the Battalion continued its advance southward, bypassing Awlanbyin. Maj. Gen. Sakurai and his headquarters was also involved in fighting off enemy counterattacks near Ingyang on the 5th and 6th and due to failure of his communications, was unable to keep in touch with his units. This loss of communications contact for a period of four days at the start of the

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2. There is reason to believe that one platoon of the 5th Company of the 143d Infantry Regiment had already reached Ngakyedauk Pass having moved north from Htindaw on 4 February.

operation had an adverse affect on the entire operation and particularly in connection with the engagement at Sinzweya.

By the night of the 6th, the 1st Battalion of the 213th Infantry Regiment had succeeded in crossing the Mayu Range and establishing a base south of Ngangyaung from which it could harass and interfere with traffic on the Bawli Bazar-Maungdaw Road.

#### The Doi Unit Northward Movement

On 5 February, the commander of the 55th Division, seeing that the initial advance of the Sakurai Unit was developing favorably, ordered the Doi Unit, to take the offensive to the north with all possible strength in order to compress the enemy 7th Division. The 3d Battalion of the 143d Infantry Regiment was ordered to attack from Letwedet toward Hill 129, the following morning. The Battalion took the hill on the 7th and was joined on the 8th by the 2d Battalion, which had advanced from the north. Believing that the main battle was over, the two battalions remained in that location, completely out of the operation.

#### Division Reserve Committed

On the 6th of February, the Division commander received information from the Sakurai Unit Headquarters that it was involved in fighting near Ingyaung and lacked infantry protection. The Division commander thereupon resolved to commit his only reserve unit, the 2d Battalion of the 144th Infantry Regiment, and ordered it to move

north to reinforce General Sakurai and the 55th Engineer Regiment near Amlanbyin. The Battalion, however, found its route blocked by strong units of the British-Indian 7th Division and, although unable to break through to reinforce the Sakurai Headquarters, was successful in seizing and holding an enemy position northwest of Sinohbyin on the night of the 7th.

On the 8th, the Sakurai Unit Headquarters managed to extricate itself from its difficulties in the vicinity of Ingyaung and advanced to the north bank of the Ngakyedauk River. Learning of the situation developing at Sinzweya, General Sakurai determined to personally direct Col. Tanabashi's operation. Ordering the 55th Engineer Regiment to cross the river and occupy Hill 147 to protect the left flank, General Sakurai, with his headquarters, moved northwest with the intention of bypassing the enemy 89th Brigade and approaching Sinzweya from the north.

#### Attacks on Sinzweya

In the Sinzweya area, the 112th Regiment made a second night attack on the 9th and was successful in breaking through the southwest corner of the enemy's perimeter defense in the Sinzweya Basin. Although the Regiment was successful in firing an ammunition dump and doing great damage, the enemy's employment of tanks forced it to draw back without further exploiting the breakthrough.

On the morning of the 10th, Maj. Gen. Sakurai met Col. Tanabashi on Hill 315, northeast of Sinzweya, and encouraged him to press the

enemy more aggressively. The second failure of the 112th to achieve a signal success appeared, however, to have so depressed morale that the Regiment was reluctant to repeat its attack. In order to save the situation General Sakurai requested the 55th Division to send the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 143d Infantry Regiment which were still in the vicinity of Hill 129 and out of his control. The addition of these two units gave Maj. Gen. Sakurai five battalions under his immediate command but the chance to achieve a signal success had gone. In the past, the Japanese had won victories merely by surrounding the enemy but now the enemy had adopted a new tactic of establishing a strong perimeter defense which, when supported by air supply, enabled them to withstand Japanese encircling tactics.

#### The Offensive Halted

The Sakurai Unit fought aggressively with all available strength for a period of about ten days, reaching a climax on the 14th and 15th of February, but all efforts failed and casualties began to mount. Lack of supplies, particularly food, handicapped Japanese operations after the 15th while the enemy, receiving supplies by air, had adequate food and ammunition.

As the offensive of the Sakurai Unit reached its climax on the 14th of February, the troops of the Unit were disposed as follows:



Hill 315 Area: Hq. 55th Inf Gp  
 Hq Co, 55th Inf Gp  
 2d Bn, 143d Inf Regt (less 4th  
 and 6th Cos)

Hill 1033 Area: Hq, 112th Inf Regt

West of Sinzweya 1st and 3d Bns, 112th Inf Regt  
 and at 4th Co, 143d Inf Regt  
 Ngakyedauk Pass: One Plat, 5th Co, 143d Inf Regt  
 3d Bn, 55th Mt Arty

South of Sinzweya: 2d Bn, 112th Inf Regt

East of Sinzweya: 3d Bn, 143d Inf Regt

Hill 147 Area: 55th Engr Regt (less elms)

South of 1st Bn, 213th Inf Regt (less 1st  
 Ngangyaung: and 3d Cos)  
 6th Co, 143d Inf Regt

N. B. The 2d Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment, northwest of Sinohbyin was not under control of General Sakurai.

### Tactical Blunders

The Japanese forces were guilty of a great tactical error during this period, in that they assumed that the main enemy force was contained when the British-Indian 7th Division was bottled up at Sinzweya, and failed to take into consideration that the enemy 9th, 33d and 114th Brigades were in position just north of the original Japanese main defensive line. This lack of knowledge or consideration was responsible for the Sakurai Unit putting on such a brave front and taking such aggressive action at Sinzweya. Fortunately for the Japanese forces the British were even more inept tactically and the three brigades took no action while the battle at Sinzweya

was progressing. This surprising lack of initiative on the part of the British brigades permitted the Sakurai Unit to not only conduct an offensive but also to withdraw to its original positions.

#### Enemy Reinforcements

Meanwhile, during the middle of February, it was learned that the British-Indian 26th Division was moving down from the north. General Sakurai summoned the 55th Engineer Regiment, which reached Hill 202 on the 18th, and made it responsible for covering the rear. At this point the besieger found himself besieged and as enemy pressure from the north built up in the vicinity of Hills 315 and 202, the Sakurai Unit found itself threatened from all sides. However, the 55th Engineers and the Sakurai Unit Headquarters withstood repeated attacks by the enemy 26th Division.

#### Withdrawal from Sinzweya

The last attack on Sinzweya, made on the 22d, ended in failure. On the following night, acting on his own responsibility, Colonel Tanabashi withdrew his main force to Kreingyaung, leaving the 8th Company of the 112th Infantry at Ngakyedauk Pass and the 2d Battalion of the 112th on a small hill south of Sinzweya. Upon receiving a report of Tanabashi's withdrawal, Maj. Gen. Sakurai was extremely angry but subsequently realized that the move was undoubtedly inevitable, being forced by lack of food and supplies. At the suggestion of Gen. Sakurai, the Division commander determined to

suspend the offensive and ordered the Sakurai Unit to withdraw to the line of the Buthidaung-Maungdaw Road. Moving units into the line to cover the withdrawal, the movement south began on the night of 24 February and was completed by 1 March. The 1st Battalion of the 213th Infantry, which had been holding positions in the vicinity of the road between Ngangyaung and Maunghnama since 6 February, left its positions on the night of the 25th and, after breaking through the enemy lines, returned safely on 3 March.

#### The Northern Arakan Operation - Second Phase





Although the 55th Division had failed to achieve its objective of completely destroying the British-Indian 7th Division during the first phase of the Northern Arakan Operation, the Division commander still planned to carry out the second phase, the offensive against the British-Indian 5th Division in the area west of the Mayu Range. However, in view of the failure to achieve complete success in the first phase, the commander of the 28th Army advised the Division that it would not be necessary to adhere to the original plan. Accordingly General Hanaya, CG of the 55th Division, abandoned his former plan in favor of establishing a strong defense. In order to gain time for regrouping, raiding operations were conducted which were calculated to baffle and confuse the enemy at the start of their anticipated offensive (Map No. 4).

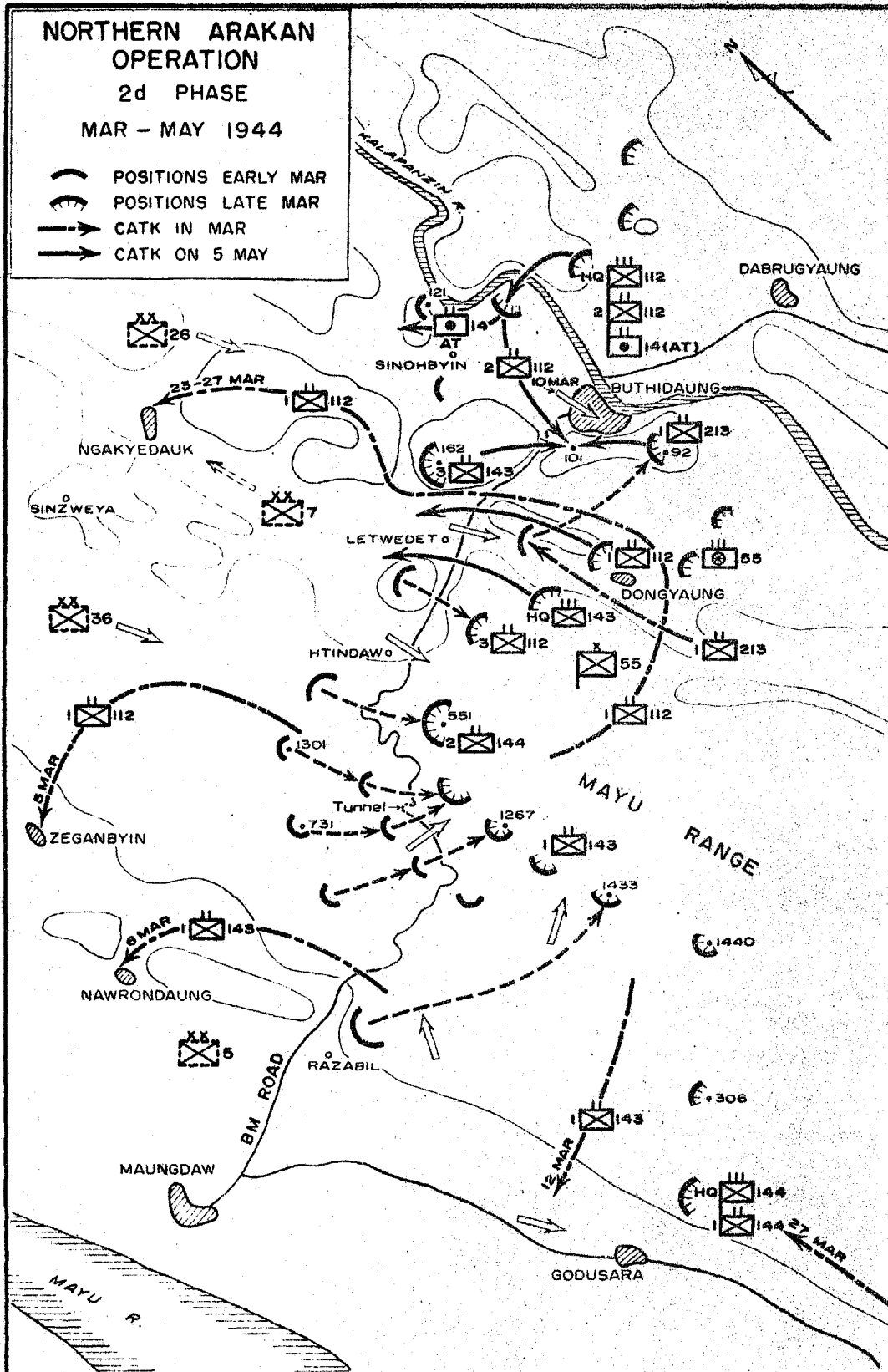
MAP NO. 4

NORTHERN ARAKAN  
OPERATION

2d PHASE

MAR - MAY 1944

-  POSITIONS EARLY MAR
-  POSITIONS LATE MAR
-  CATK IN MAR
-  CATK ON 5 MAY



On the night of 4 March, the 1st Battalion of the 112th Infantry Regiment made a surprise raid, sweeping in a wide arc from Hill 1301 the Battalion made a dawn attack on Zeganbyin, deep in enemy territory and behind the lines of the British-Indian 5th Division. On the 5th the 1st Battalion of the 143d Infantry launched a similar attack, penetrating as far as Nawrondaung, also well in the British rear. The raids were successful in creating some confusion in the enemy rear and both units withdrew without suffering excessive losses.

#### Defense Dispositions

In the meantime the 55th Division had rearranged its defenses and by 5 March the following troop dispositions had been made:

##### Right Defense Unit (North of Buthidaung and east of the Kalapanzin River)

Commander: Col. Tanabashi

Hq, 112th Inf Regt  
2d Bn, 112th Inf Regt  
9th Co, 112th Inf Regt  
3d Co, 213th Inf Regt

Elms, 55th Mt Arty Regt  
14th AT Bn (less two btrys)

##### Center Defense Unit (Buthidaung-Maungdaw Road)

Commander: Maj. Gen. Sakurai

143d Inf Regt (less main body of 2d Bn)  
1st Bn, 213th Inf Regt (less 1st and 3d Cos)  
1st and 3d Bns, 122th Inf Regt (less 9th Co)  
2d Bn, 144th Inf Regt  
2d Co, 55th Engr Regt  
Elms, 55th Mt Arty Regt  
One btry, 14th AT Bn

Left Defense Unit (West Coast south of Godusara)

Commander: Col. Yoshida

144th Inf Regt (less 2d Bn and 7th Co)  
3d Co, 55th Recon Regt  
ELms, 55th Mt Arty Regt

British Offensive - March 1944

Defense dispositions were barely completed when, on 6 March, the enemy launched an intensive attack toward Buthidaung. They captured Hill 121 on the 8th, and the village of Buthidaung on the 10th. The enemy also became active in the area west of the Mayu Range and on or about the 13th, Razabil was captured. By mid-March, enemy pressure had forced the 55th Division to relinquish key positions on the north side of the Buthidaung-Maungdaw Road.

The period from 10 to 20 March was a critical time for the Division: the battle had reached a climax; losses were high and there were some positions in the Mayu Range that were being defended by a mere handful of survivors. The dogged resistance of the front line units enabled the Division to hold the majority of the main positions, but the officers and men, who had been fighting almost continuously since 1942, were completely exhausted.

The British, too, were experiencing heavy losses and shortly after 15 March the 7th Division was replaced by the 26th Division. Becoming aware of this shift on 20 March, the 55th Division commander determined to take advantage of the situation and on the

night of the 22d ordered a general attack. Although the 1st Battalion of the 112th Infantry drove through to Ngakyedauk, well to the British rear, and created some confusion by aggressive action from the 23d to the 27th, the attack was not particularly effective in so far as over-all results were concerned. The enemy immediately thrust the British-Indian 36th Division into the line between the 26th and 5th Divisions.

Upon completion of regrouping, the enemy resumed heavy attacks with fresh troops and, in April, gradually penetrated the Japanese defensive positions. In the middle of the month, the hills north of Dongyaung and southwest of Buthidaung as well as a part of Hill 551, a key point in the Mayu Range, fell to the enemy. Hill 162, west of Buthidaung, and the hill east of Sinohbyin were isolated, but still in Japanese hands.

In spite of the critical situation, the 55th Division commander maintained determined resistance, confident that the worse things were in Arakan, the better they were in Assam. He felt that the diversion created by the Ha-Go Operation was undoubtedly insuring the success of the U-Go (Imphal) Operation.

#### British Forces Shifted

The 28th Army commander came to the conclusion that the continued stubborn defense of the Buthidaung-Maungdaw Road by the 55th Division would result in unjustifiable losses. Furthermore, he was

considering the future disposition of the Division in the southern coastal area. Accordingly, on 17 April, 28th Army issued orders directing the movement of the 55th Division to the south. As it was desired that the movement be made at the discretion of General Hanaya, CG of the Division, the date of the move was not specified.

### 55th Division Offensive Renewed

Before the 55th Division's move could be made, there was a shifting of enemy forces, apparently as a result of efforts to reinforce the Imphal front. In the middle of April the British mechanized forces and the 5th and 36th Divisions were successively moved from the Arakan area and the British-Indian 25th Division moved in to replace them.

This change of forces and reduction in enemy strength relieved the severe pressure on the 55th Division and, instead of withdrawing to the south, General Hanaya determined to destroy the enemy forces in the Buthidaung area prior to the start of the monsoon season. Early in May, he concentrated five battalions with about 2,500 men and five batteries with 10 artillery pieces - the maximum striking force that could be assembled at that time. At dawn, on 5 May, a coordinated offensive was launched under the command of Maj. Gen. Sakurai. The Kubo Unit (1st Battalion of the 213th Infantry), the Furuya Unit (Headquarters and 2d Battalion of the 112th Infantry)

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3. Col. Tanabashi had been replaced as commander of the 112th Infantry Regiment by Col. Furuya in early March.



and the Kurooka Unit (3d Battalion of the 143d Infantry) advanced to Hill 101 from three directions. The Doi Unit (Headquarters, 143d Infantry Regiment with the 1st and 3d Battalions of the 112th Infantry Regiment) advanced toward Letwedet to cut off the enemy's route of retreat from Buthidaung. The Nakao Unit (Headquarters, 14th AT Battalion and two infantry companies) seized Hill 121 to protect the right flank of the attacking force. The offensive was successful in clearing the sector east of the Sinohbyin-Letwedet line in a day. Fighting in the Mayu Range, however, continued until mid-May with some gains being registered by the Japanese forces - although they were unable to retake the tunnel on the Buthidaung-Maungdaw Road.

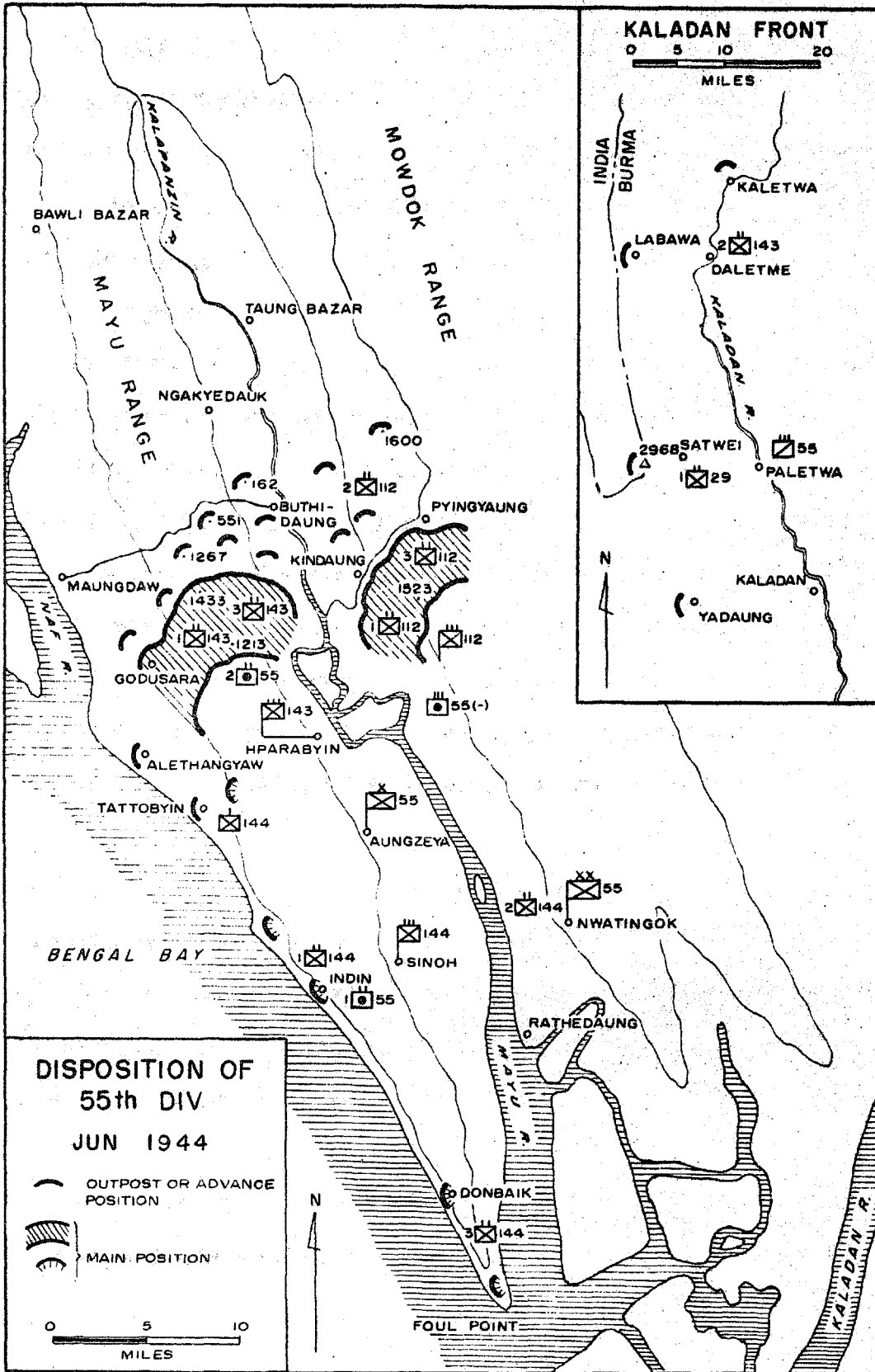
In late May the monsoon season set in and fighting ceased. The enemy withdrew its main body to the area north of Ngakyedauk Pass and the 55th Division gradually pulled its front lines back to the south to wait out the monsoon season (Map No. 5)

#### Kaladan Operation

It was important that the Japanese continue to hold the Kaladan River Basin as it provided a rear communications line for the 55th Division. In addition, the Myohaung Plain, south of Kyauktaw, was an important rice producing area which could easily provide for the needs of five divisions.

Because there were few bridges, even on the motor roads, the most practical means of travel was by water. Even in the dry season,

MAP NO. 5



small landing barges could go as far up the Kaladan River as Daletme and large landing barges as far as Paletwa. The Lemro River was navigable by large landing barges as far as the area east of Myohaung and during high water almost all the creeks in the flatlands south of Thayettabin could accomodate large landing barges.

#### British Attack on Kaladan Valley (Map No. 6)

In mid-January 1944, the 55th Division commander had ordered the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment, under Col. Kawashima, to the Kaladan Valley to take over the missions of the 1st Battalion of the 213d Infantry Regiment which was to come under the command of Maj. Gen. Sakurai for the Northern Arakan Operation. The Reconnaissance Regiment (less the 3d Company) was to check any enemy coming down from the north along the Kaladan Valley and to protect the rear of the Division.

The leading brigade of the West African 81st Division left Daletme on 18 January and, heading south, made contact with the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment about the 24th. The Reconnaissance Regiment, badly outnumbered, conducted withdrawal operations pitting its small force in a rear guard action against the two brigades of the enemy. The outcome of such an uneven struggle could not long be delayed and by mid-February the 81st Division had occupied the mouth of the Kaladan defile without too much difficulty. For some reason, Col. Kawashima had failed to report his situation to the 55th Division



and on 18 February, General Hanaya was amazed when he received a report that Kyauktaw, key point of the Kaladan front, had been taken by the enemy. At that time there were no Japanese troops on the east side of the Kaladan River, south of Kyauktaw except a Capt. Honjo and his small Military Administration Detachment in Myohaung. Fortunately, about 1,000 replacement troops for the 144th Infantry Regiment passed through Myohaung at that time. Capt. Honjo, who had brought the report of the fall of Kyauktaw to General Hanaya, took command of the replacements on his own responsibility and held the line south of Thayettabin to protect Myohaung.

#### Reinforcements for the Kaladan Front

The emergency situation in the Kaladan sector developed as the Northern Arakan Operation was at its height and the 55th Division was concentrating all possible strength in the offensive. Although General Hanaya was reluctant to lose even one man from the Mayu front, because of the tremendous strategic importance of the Kaladan River Basin he decided to reinforce the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment with such strength as he could spare. On 18 February, Maj. Matsuo, commanding officer of the 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry, was recalled from the hospital and, on the 21st, arrived in Myohaung with a composite unit composed of the following:

One composite company from 3d Bn, 144th Inf Regt

A detachment from the 2d Bn, 143d Inf Regt, consisting of patients recently discharged from the hospital.

**Three officers from Division Headquarters**

Simultaneously, Maj. Gen. Sakurai was requested to send as many men as possible from the 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry to Kaladan. General Sakurai complied by sending the Headquarters of the 2d Battalion, the 4th Company, one MG platoon and one battalion gun squad. On the 26th, this group joined Major Matsuo at Myohaung giving him a total strength of approximately half a battalion.

Meanwhile, reports of the Kaladan situation had reached 28th Army which immediately sent arms, via air, to Capt. Honjo's composite unit. The army commander recognized the necessity of leaving the 55th Division free to conduct the Northern Arakan Operation and reorganized the Koba Detachment to move to the Kaladan front and operate under direct control of 28th Army. On the 21st an order was issued assigning to the Koba Detachment the mission of driving the enemy as far to the north as possible and occupying the Kaladan Valley. The reorganized Koba Detachment was composed of the following units:

Koba Detachment

Commander: Col. Tomotoki Koba  
CO, 111th Inf Regt

Hq, 111th Inf Regt .....	From Akyab
3d Bn, 111th Inf Regt (less 9th Co).....	En route to Akyab from the south.
2d Bn, 143d Inf Regt (Composite).....	En route to Myohaung
55th Recon Regt (less 3d Co).....	West bank of Kaladan River
One Plat, 3d Hvy Fld Arty Regt.....	On the Mayu front. (One 149-mm How)
Honjo Composite Unit.....	North of Myohaung

In late February, an attempt was made to transport the 1st Battalion of the 29th Infantry Regiment, 2d Division, from Magwe to Akyab by air. Enemy air superiority, however, prevented this move to provide additional reinforcements to the Kaladan front. Col. Koba proceeded to Myohaung on 22 February and began assembling his force. The two battalions from the 111th and 143d Regiments arrived in Myohaung by the 28th.

#### Counterattacks by the Koba Detachment

By 25 February the West African 81st Division had completely occupied Kyauktaw and on the 29th started an advance toward Apaukwa along the west bank of the Kaladan River. The 55th Reconnaissance Regiment was pushed back to the Apaukwa-Kanzauk area and the 81st Division threatened to isolate the entire 55th Division from southern Burma.

Col. Koba's plan of attack called for the use of the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment on the west bank and the Honjo Unit on the east bank of the Kaladan River. While these two forces checked the enemy advance, the 3d Battalion of the 111th Infantry and the 2d Battalion of the 143d would move north, along the western foot of mountains north of Teinnyo, to make a flanking attack on the enemy on the east bank. Having completed that task the battalions would move across the Kaladan River in the rear of the main force of the 81st Division.

On 1 March the 3d Battalion of the 111th Infantry drove through to Lamadaw from Kagyo and captured Hill 263, while the 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry Regiment seized the vicinity of Thayettabin. By the 5th, the enemy force on the left bank had been routed. On 2 March the enemy had captured Apaukwa but, shaken by the success of the Koba Detachment's flanking movement, began to withdraw to the north.

#### British Withdrawal

Determined to cut off the retreat of the West African 81st Division, Col. Koba ordered the 3d Battalion to rush to Bidonegyaungwa and the 2d Battalion to Kaladan. The two units arrived at their respective destinations about the 10th, while the main force of the enemy was still south of Sabaseik. The 3d Battalion turned south to attack the enemy rear and, by the following day, having moved to the area just north of Htabaw, Maj. Kobayashi the commanding officer gathered his officers on a hill to issue orders for the future actions. The group was taken under fire by the enemy and sustained heavy casualties, including Maj. Kobayashi who was killed. When Col. Koba, at Kaladan, received word of this serious blow to the Battalion he was in somewhat of a quandary regarding his next movements. At that time he had no knowledge of the fact that the enemy line of communications passed through Sabaseik and because the only map available to him was a small-scale map (1:500,000) it was



difficult to accurately plan operations. Based on the information available to him, he decided that it would be necessary to reinforce the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment which was still checked as far south as Laungbanga. Ordering the 2d Battalion to hold Kaladan, he moved the balance of his force, including the 3d Battalion of the 111th Infantry, down the Kaladan River by boat to Kinthe. There he was reinforced, on 15 March, by the 9th Company and the Regimental Gun Company (two guns) of the 111th Infantry.

#### Domination of the Kaladan Valley

The enemy offered stubborn resistance in the vicinity of Sabaseik while the Reconnaissance Regiment continued its extremely slow progress. At that time, however, Col. Sugimoto arrived to take over command of the Regiment from Col. Kawashima and under the aggressive leadership of the new commander, the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment took on new life.

On the 19th, the Koba Detachment made a successful attack on Sabaseik and again the enemy began a northern withdrawal. The Detachment pursued to Kaladan with the Reconnaissance Regiment moving on land and the balance of the Detachment traveling by boat. In the meantime, the 2d Battalion had been forced to relinquish Kaladan. By the end of March the Koba Detachment was concentrated astride the Kaladan River just south of Kaladan which it succeeded in recapturing in early April.

From this point on, the enemy made no further offensive threats, apparently contented with fighting a step-by-step delaying action, making good use of advantageous terrain features. On 21 April, Paletwa fell into the hands of the pursuing Japanese and on 2 May, Daletme was captured by the Koba Detachment.

#### Regrouping of Forces

In the meantime, in consideration of the favorable progress of the Kaladan Operation and the importance of protecting Akyab, the 28th Army formulated a plan for a regrouping of forces. As a part of that plan, the 1st Battalion of the 29th Infantry Regiment, which had been at Akyab since 9 March, was ordered to Kaladan on 19 April. Later, after the Battalion had advanced up the Pi River to Satwei and crossed the Burma-India border on 24 April, the 28th Army issued an order reorganizing the Kaladan front. Col. Koba and his original units (principally the Headquarters and 3d Battalion of the 111th Infantry Regiment) were to return to Akyab, while the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment, the 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry, and the 1st Battalion of the 29th Infantry were to take over responsibility for the Kaladan front under the command of Col. Sugimoto.

Because the Kaladan Operation started under very adverse conditions and the Japanese forces engaged were hurriedly assembled in the face of an emergency, it was felt that the Koba Detachment had achieved an outstanding success. Particularly ingenious had been

the employment by Col. Koba of his one piece of artillery, a 149-mm howitzer. Moving the gun from one area to another on a large landing barge, he had successfully employed it to exploit the weak points of the comparatively lightly equipped enemy. In recognition of its performance in the Kaladan Operation, the Army commander presented a citation to the Koba Detachment.

#### Troop Disposition - May 1944

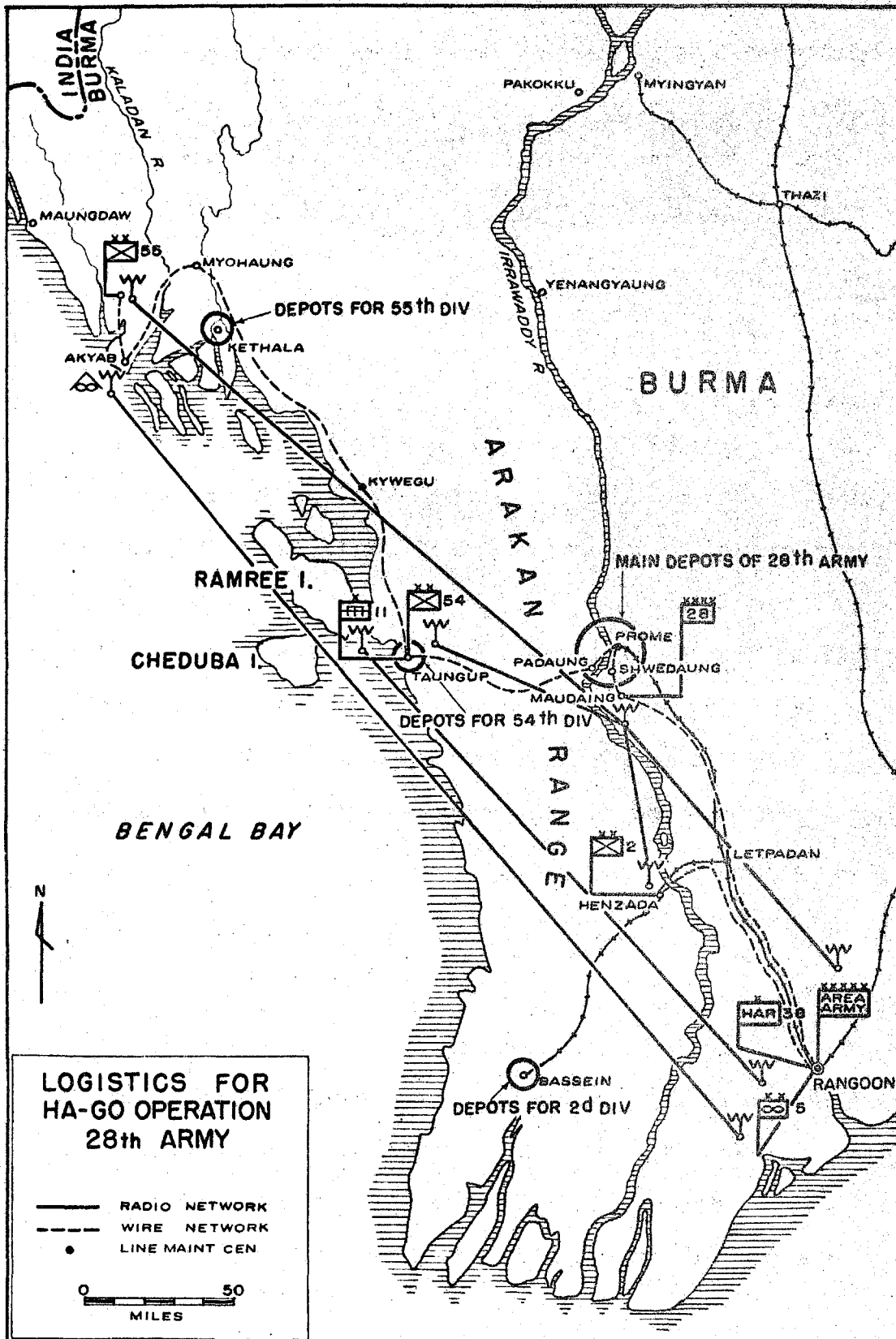
About the middle of May the 2d Battalion of the 143d Infantry occupied Kaletwa, the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment secured the Burma-India border near Labawa and the 1st Battalion of the 29th made a raid on Banzai Bazar, about ten miles northeast of Bawli Bazar. The West African 81st Division was driven completely out of the sector and the Kaladan Operation was concluded. Toward the end of May, as the monsoon season began, the Sugimoto Unit reverted to 55th Division control and troop dispositions were made to wait out the rainy season (Map No. 5)

#### Line of Communications (Map No. 7)

#### Signal Communications

The main wire and radio communications networks available to the 28th Army were as shown on Map No. 7. The establishment of communications networks was greatly expedited by using the existing lines that paralleled the main operational roads. The cables that ran underwater along the Irrawaddy River bed from Prome to Henzada had,

MAP NO. 7



however, deteriorated badly and were of little use.

Line maintenance centers were located at Letpadan, Prome, and Kywegu and there was a line between Rangoon and Henzada which had been installed by the Burma National Telecommunications Bureau.

### Supply

Logistic emphasis for the Ha-Go Operation was placed on the supplying of fuel and munitions to the 55th Division. In order to meet the requirements of the intensive operation, the Army moved supply terminals as far toward the front as practicable and made every effort to maintain transportation capacity.

The principal concentrations of Army supply depots were near Prome and Shwedaung. Depots for the 55th Division were located at Kethala, depots for the 54th Division were located at Taungup, while those for the 2d Division were at Bassein.

Although it was possible for the units on the northern front as well as those on Ramree and Cheduba Islands to procure local provisions, few local sources existed in the area south of the Kaladan River Basin and west of the Arakan Range.

### Transportation

Transportation posed a particularly difficult problem. There was only one motor road crossing the Arakan Range and, north of Taungup, the poor coastal roads combined with increasing enemy air activity made movement of supplies by motor vehicle almost impossible. Enemy air activity was also responsible for making water

transport so hazardous and difficult that it was almost entirely limited to night movement. Transportation during the Ha-Go Operation was provided as shown below:

<u>Area Served</u>	<u>Unit</u>
Between Padaung and Taungup	55th Independent Motor Transport Bn 2d and 3d Cos, 2d Transport Regt
Between Taungup and Kethala	11th Shipping Group (Hq) 11th Shipping Engr Regt 3d Sea Transport Bn 51st Independent Transport Bn 236th Independent Motor Transport Co 1st Co, 2d Transport Regt 2d Co, 54th Transport Regt 3d Co, 55th Transport Regt
Between Taungup and Akyab	38th Water Transport Service Co
Local Transport at Prome*	3d Co, 54th Transport Regt Composite Motor Transport Co

\* Transportation between Rangoon and Prome was conducted chiefly by rail.

### Medical

The medical situation was generally favorable. The percentage of malaria cases, by division, was as follows: 2d Division, 5 to 8 per cent; 54th Division, 2 to 3 per cent; 55th Division, 20 per cent and forces directly assigned to the 28th Army, 7 to 15 per cent. There was little incidence of contagious disease.

## CHAPTER 2

### THE KAN OPERATION, NUMBER 1

#### Situation in Mid-1944

By the beginning of the 1944 monsoon season it became clear that the Imphal Operation had failed and, on 5 July, the Burma Area Army issued orders for suspension of the operation. The actions in the Salween River and the Hukawng Valley sectors were also going badly for the Japanese. With the exception of the northern Arakan front where the 28th Army was still accomplishing its mission, the situation in the entire Burma theater had become critical. Furthermore, intelligence estimates indicated that enemy forces, including a powerful airborne unit, were prepared to launch large-scale attacks after the end of the monsoon season.

#### New 28th Army Mission

On 12 July, the Burma Area Army, in an attempt to cope with the current situation, issued an order assigning the 28th Army a new mission:

The 28th Army will prepare for further defensive operations with particular importance being attached to the Irrawaddy Delta and the strategic coastal areas south of Tamandu. Ramree and Cheduba Islands will be held as long as possible. The 2d Division and the bulk of the motor transport units attached to the 28th Army will be

transferred to the 33d Army immediately.<sup>1</sup>

At the time of the issuing of the order, the 28th Army, having been advised of its contents in advance, was conducting a conference of staff officers and division commanders at Paungde to consider operational plans for the period following the 1944 monsoon season.<sup>2</sup>

On 13 July Lt. Gen. Kawabe, commander of the Burma Area Army, attended the conference. Although the basic plan, as outlined at the commanders' conference, was not completed in detail until October, the following general concept was established at the July meeting:

In view of the fact that the extensive defense area of the 28th Army (400 miles long and 150 miles wide) is too large to be completely covered by only two divisions, strategic areas will be defended as follows (Map No. 8):

(A) -  Holding Areas : The entire area west of the Kaladan River Basin, including Akyab and the coastal islands and the southern tip of the Irrawaddy Delta will be designated as Holding Areas. Action in these sectors will be primarily defensive, with every available means being employed to check enemy advances.

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1. The 33d Army had been organized with the 18th and 56th Divisions, in April 1944, to conduct operations on the Hukawng and Salween fronts. Later reinforced by the 53d Division, the 33d Army was commanded by Lt. Gen. Masaki Honda.

2. Headquarters of the 28th Army had been moved from Maudaing to Paungde during May.





(B) - Counterattack Areas: The coastal strip from Myebon south to Pagoda Point and the Arakan Mountain zone will be considered as Counterattack Areas. Forces assigned to these sectors will conduct a semi-mobile defense and will endeavor to destroy enemy land and amphibious attacks by independent and aggressive action.

(C) - Decisive Battle Area: The Irrawaddy River Basin, except the southern delta region, will be the final defensive line. Defense positions in depth, will be prepared in this area and in the final decisive battle the enemy will be met and halted by the entire available strength of the 28th Army.

#### Task Force Organization and Missions

To defend the 28th Army zone of responsibility and to carry out the missions outlined in the new defense concept, three task forces were formed from the 54th and 55th Divisions:

Sakura Detachment - Commander: Maj. Gen. Sakurai

55th Inf Gp Hq  
2d Bn, 112th Inf Regt  
1st Bn, 143d Inf Regt  
3d Bn, 144th Inf Regt  
2d Bn, 55th Mt Arty Regt  
55th Recon Regt (less 3d Co)  
4th Co, 143d Inf Regt (attached)  
3d Co, 4th Shipping Engr Regt  
One co, 55th Engr Regt  
One co, 55th Trans Regt

#### Missions:

1. To take over the defense sector formerly assigned to the 55th Division and screen the withdrawal of the Division.
2. To delay the advance of the enemy in the area northwest of the Akyab-Myohaung line as long as possible.

54th Division - Commander: Lt. Gen. Katamura

Organic Units: Hq, 54th Div  
54th Inf Gp Hq  
111th Inf Regt  
121st Inf Regt  
154th Inf Regt (less 2d Bn)  
54th Fld Arty Regt (less 1st Btry)  
54th Recon Regt  
54th Engr Regt  
54th Trans Regt

Attached Units: 14th AT Bn (less 1st Btry)  
2d Btry, 3d Hv Fld Arty Regt  
One btry, 35th AA Bn  
1st Co, 11th Shipping Engr Regt  
26th Ponton Co  
38th Water Trans Sv Co

**Missions:**

1. To check and crush the enemy in the zone between the Myebon-Mt. Yoma (Hill 4793) line to the Dalet River.

2. In coordination with the Sakura Detachment, a strong element will be engaged in conducting delaying actions in the area south of the Akyab-Myohaung line and will cover the withdrawal of the Detachment.

3. To hold Ramree and Cheduba Islands as long as possible.

55th Division - Commander: Lt. Gen. Hanaya

Organic Units: Hq, 55th Div  
112th Inf Regt (less 2d Bn)  
143d Inf Regt (less 1st Bn and 4th Co)  
144th Inf Regt (less 3d Bn)  
55th Mt Arty Regt (less 3d Bn)  
3d Co, 55th Recon Regt  
55th Engr Regt (less one co)  
55th Trans Regt (less one co)

Attached Units: 1st Btry, 14th AT Bn  
10th River Crossing Material Co  
One plat, 11th Shipping Engr Regt  
One co, 51st Trans Bn

Missions:

1. Withdraw to the Bassein area to replace the 2d Division as soon as possible.
2. Defend the Irrawaddy Delta and the strategic area around Basein.

Other instructions of a general nature included the organizing and equipping of all rear area troops to combat airborne attacks and to complete the work started in April 1944 to reconstruct the Minbu-An Road as a dry season motor road. The boundary between the operational zones of the 54th and 55th Divisions was established as the Prome-Taungup Road, with the road itself being in the 54th Division zone. Fortifications, in three echelons were to be constructed in the Arakan Range on the Prome-Taungup and Minbu-An Roads.

Regrouping

On 17 July, the 2d Division began its movement northeast to the Shan Plateau while the first echelon of the main body of the 55th Division started its southward movement. The Sakura Detachment remained in the northwest to protect the rear of the 55th Division and screen its southward move. For the most part, men and draft animals moved by foot, water transport being utilized for the transportation of approximately 2,000 tons of ammunition. The

redispotion of the 55th Division in the Bassein area was accomplished by the end of September and, by the end of October, the bulk of equipment and ammunition had also been moved (Map No. 9).

In order to deceive the enemy, measures were taken to make it appear that the Division had arrived at Bassein from Malaya to take part in a new operation which was referred to as the "Chittagong Operation."

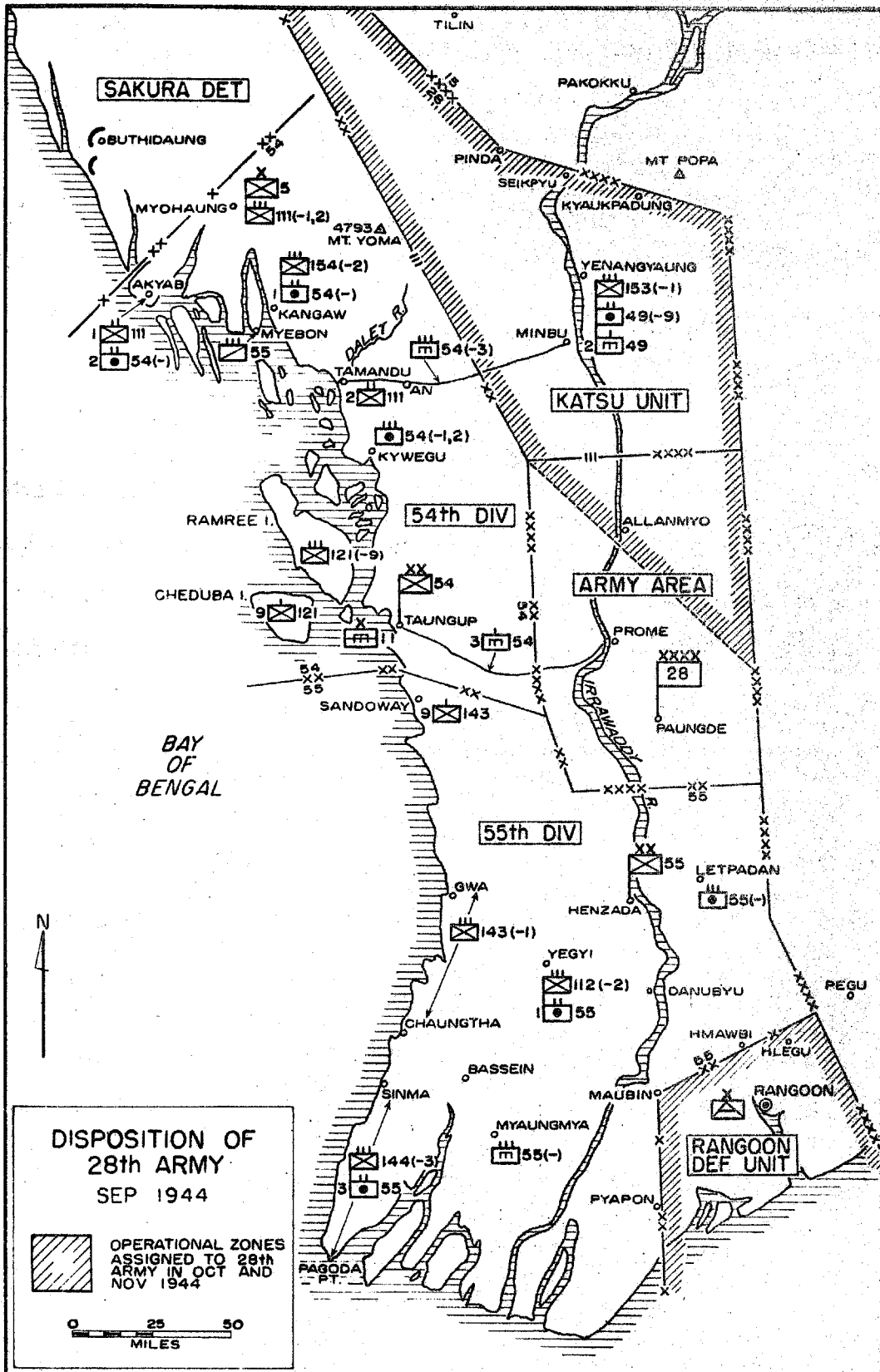
#### Burma Area Army Command Changes

In September there was a tremendous shake-up in the headquarters of the Burma Area Army and its subordinate units, which resulted in many of the higher commanders being replaced: Lt. Gen. Hyotaro Kimura was newly designated as commander of the Area Army with Lt. Gen. Shinichi Tanaka, formerly commander of the 18th Division, as chief of staff; Lt. Gen. Shihachi Katamura was shifted from command of the 54th Division to the command of the 15th Army and Lt. Gen. Shigesaburo Miyazaki, who had commanded the 31st Infantry Group and the Miyazaki Detachment, was appointed commanding general of the 54th Division.

#### Imperial General Headquarters Directive

On 19 September, Imperial General Headquarters issued Army Directive No. 2167, addressed to the Southern Army:

MAP NO. 9



DISPOSITION OF  
28th ARMY  
SEP 1944

OPERATIONAL ZONES  
ASSIGNED TO 28th  
ARMY IN OCT AND  
NOV 1944



The chief aim in the Burma area will be to bolster the north wing of the southern sphere by ensuring the stability of the strategic areas in southern Burma. At the same time, every effort will be made to sever communications between China and India.

After careful consideration, the Southern Army issued instructions to the Burma Area Army in accordance with the IGHQ Directive:

The Area Army will hold that part of Burma south of the Lashio-Mandalay line and east of the Irrawaddy River.

#### Operational Instructions by the Burma Area Army

In accordance with the Southern Army order, the Burma Area Army prepared operational instructions for the 1944-45 dry season and directed all subordinate armies to have their plans prepared by late October. Burma Area Army instructions are outlined:

1. The operation along the China-India route, the operation in the central basin of the Irrawaddy River and the operation on the coastal areas of Burma will be referred to as the Dan, Ban and Kan Operations, respectively.

2. Preparations will be made on the basic assumption that the decisive battle will be expected along the Irrawaddy River between Mandalay and Pakokku or in the Irrawaddy Delta area. Meanwhile every effort will be made to cut off communications between India and China for as long a time as possible.

3. The 33d Army will be in charge of the Dan Operation and will conduct a strong defense on the line of Lashio, Bawdwin and Monglong.

4. The 15th Army will be assigned the Ban Operation with a decisive battle to be expected in late January. Its defense zone will, in general, extend from Mandalay along the Irrawaddy River to Yenangyaung. During the decisive battle on the Irrawaddy River, the 28th and 33d Armies will cooperate with the 15th Army and lend as much strength as possible, while conducting holding operations in their own zones.

5. The 28th Army will be responsible for the Kan Operation. The Army will make every effort to check enemy amphibious attacks from the Bay of Bengal, and subsequently will hold on a line from Yenangyaung, along the Arakan Mountain Range to Bassein and Rangoon. During the period of the Kan Operation decisive battle, the 15th and 33d Armies will conduct holding operations on their fronts.

6. The Area Army reserve will be employed in reinforcing whichever army is involved in a decisive battle in the Ban or Kan fronts.

7. Countermeasures against enemy airborne attacks will be made in order to destroy such attacks at their inception. For this purpose a systematic intelligence and communications network will be established as soon as possible.

#### Planning for the Kan Operation

This order of the Burma Area Army confirmed the mission of the 28th Army and added some new tasks. The Rangoon and Minbu areas were transferred to its operational zone while the Rangoon Defense Unit, composed of the Rangoon Antiaircraft Unit and elements of some logistic units, as well as the Katsu Force were placed under 28th Army command. The Katsu Force was composed of units from the 49th Division:



153d Inf Regt (less 1st Bn)  
3d Bn, 49th Fld Arty Regt (less 9th Btry)  
2d Co, 49th Engr Regt  
One medical company

By early October the 28th Army plan for the prosecution of the Kan Operation was in readiness, based on the original plan prepared in July. The commander of the 28th Army held a conference of his subordinate unit commanders to brief them on the new plan and their missions. In late October, a general conference was held in Rangoon under the auspices of the Area Army. The operational plan of each of the subordinate armies was thoroughly discussed in order to insure coordination of the over-all Burma operation. As a result of these deliberations, the Yenangyaung area was added to the operational zone of the 28th Army, which would be reinforced by the 72d Mixed Brigade, soon to be activated.

#### 28th Army Final Kan Operation Plan

The original plan of the 28th Army for operations in late 1944 had required no radical changes to bring it into agreement with the Burma Area Army's plan for the implementation of the Kan Operation. Since the basic concept of the 28th Army's plan was never changed, the subordinate units were able to make consistent preparations throughout the 1944 monsoon season.

## Operational Policy

The 28th Army amplified its original operational plan by issuing detailed instructions on policy and control as a guide to its subordinate units:

1. Major engagements are anticipated in the Irrawaddy Delta area, the Yenangyaung area and in the environs of Rangoon.
2. As explained in the original plan, the Army defense area is divided into Holding Areas, Counterattack Areas and Decisive Battle Areas.
3. To supplement lack of strength and equipment, fortifications will be constructed throughout each operational area, munitions will be stockpiled at locations where engagements are probable, and communications facilities, to expedite mobility, will be prepared and maintained. Anti-British natives will be encouraged to strengthen civil defenses and, in the conduct of combat operations, long range raiding tactics will be employed.
4. Reinforcement of the 28th Army by the 2d and 49th Divisions is expected when a decisive battle is joined.

## Operations Control

In addition to designating the type of defense to be employed in each area, the Army established within the frame work of the Kan Operation three sub-operations and advised its subordinate units of the action which the 28th Army would take as each of the sub-operations was activated:

Kan Operation, No. 1 will be activated in the event a decisive operation on the southwestern coast develops. It will be conducted as follows:

1. The 55th Division will check the enemy along the main defensive line from east of Gwa to the area northeast of Bassein while the Army prepares for a counteroffensive.

2. The Army will concentrate the following forces within 20 days after the operation begins:

a. Six infantry and two artillery battalions of the 54th Division to be assembled at Henzada. Foot and motor movement to be employed.

b. The 2d and 49th Divisions and, if required, one other division will be dispatched to the Henzada and Danubyu sectors by the Area Army. Movement to be by motor or rail. Certain specific elements of the 49th Division will assemble near Maubin. Movement to be by water.

c. The Katsu Force from the Yenangyaung area will move to the Henzada sector by motor transport.

3. During this phase of the operation, holding actions will be conducted on the Yenangyaung front by the 72d Mixed Brigade and on the Arakan front by one artillery and three infantry battalions of the 54th Division.

Kan Operation, No. 2 will be activated in the event a decisive operation in the Yenangyaung area develops. It will be conducted as follows:

1. The 72d Mixed Brigade, with the Katsu Force, will conduct delaying actions in the sector between the Tilin-Pakokku Road and the Irrawaddy River and will check and crush the enemy on the main defense line between Seikpyu and Mt. Popa.

2. It is expected that two infantry and one artillery battalions of the 54th Division and two infantry battalions of the 55th Division will be utilized to reinforce the units engaged in this operation.

3. If the situation permits, the main force of the 54th Division will be transferred to this front.

4. The Army will make every effort to force the enemy to conduct a decisive battle on the right bank of the Irrawaddy River where the battle can be coordinated with the 15th Army.

Ken Operation, No. 3 will be activated for the defense of Rangoon and will be conducted as follows:

1. The Rangoon Defense Unit will secure the outskirts of Rangoon.

2. The Army will assemble the following forces within 20 days of the start of the operation:

a. The main body of the 54th Division (six infantry and two artillery battalions), two infantry battalions of the 55th Division and the Katsu Force will be concentrated in the Hmawbi-Taikkyi-Maubin sector. Foot, motor and water transportation to be used.

b. The 2d and 49th Divisions will be dispatched to the Hlegu-Pegu area by the Area Army.

3. During the decisive battle, holding actions will be conducted in the Yenangyaung area by the 72d Mixed Brigade, on the Arakan front by

the balance of the 54th Division and on the southwest coastal strip by the main body of the 55th Division.

### Loss of Air Support

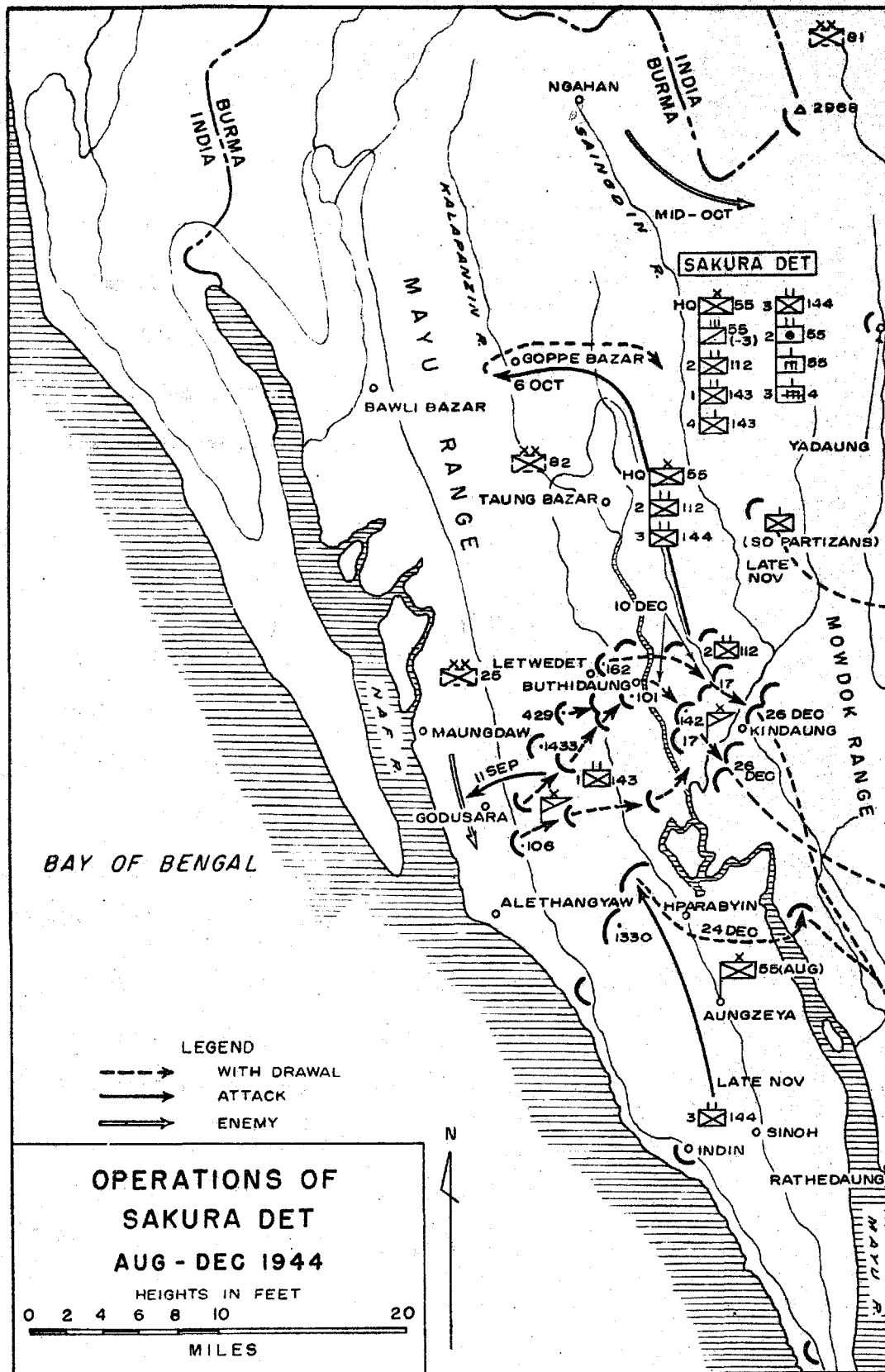
Some changes in planning regarding the amount of support to be expected from the air arm were required in December, as about half the strength of the 5th Air Division was transferred to the Philippines. This move left only about 40 planes available to support ground operations in all of Burma and limited air support to strategic air reconnaissance.

### Operations of the Sakura Detachment

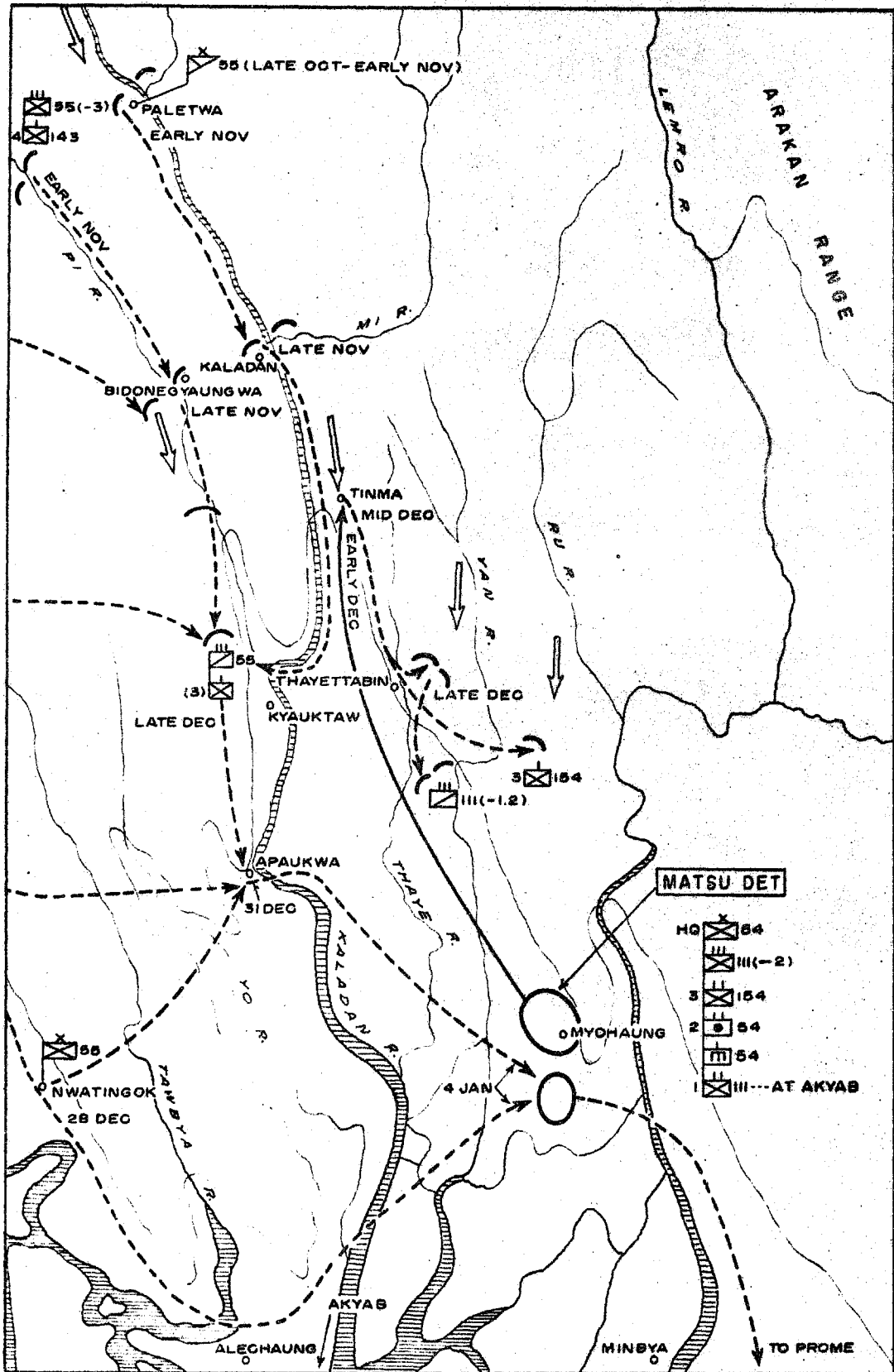
Meanwhile, as the 55th Division began its movement south, in the latter part of July, the Sakura Detachment remained in position as a holding and screening unit. Initially the Detachment covered a broad front from Donbaik north to Alethangyaw, along the coast, and then east to Kaladan. The 3d Battalion, 144th Infantry Regiment was deployed in the coastal sector; the 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry in the Mayu Range; the 2d Battalion, 112th Infantry astride the Kalapanzin River; the So Partizan Team (about 100 men under Capt. Kanetoshi) in the Mowdok Mountain Range and the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment in the Kaladan Valley (Map No. 10a and b).

Early in September there were an increasing number of indications that the enemy was preparing for an attack which was intended

MAP NO. 10a



MAP NO. 10b



to outflank the troops in the area west of the Mayu Range. On 11 September, in an effort to forestall the enemy attack, General Sakurai launched an attack with units from the Sakura Detachment. The 1st Battalion, 143d Infantry and the 3d Battalion, 144th Infantry, supported by six mountain guns made an effective surprise raid on an enemy group of approximately brigade size at Godusara. Later, on 6 October, the Detachment also carried out a surprise attack on Goppe Bazar, when the 2d Battalion, 112th Infantry and the 3d Battalion, 144th Infantry were successful in confusing and delaying the enemy's attack preparations.

#### British Offensive - November 1944

In mid-October, a powerful element of the West African 81st Division had moved into the Kaladan front from the direction of Ngahan. Maj. Gen. Sakurai rushed to Paletwa to conduct operations but by the end of October, the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment had been gradually pressed back to Paletwa and the area to the west. The regiment withstood repeated attacks until early November when it was ordered to withdraw to the Kaladan-Bidonegyaungwa line where it was reinforced by two companies from the Mayu front.

In mid-November the British launched a general offensive with the West African 82d Division driving along the Kalapanzin River and the British-Indian 25th Division striking west of the Mayu Range. Vastly outnumbered, the Sakura Detachment defended the Buthidaung



area up to early December with some 1,500 men opposing two full divisions.

#### Reinforcement of the Kaladan Area

In consideration of the increasing enemy pressure both in the Kaladan and Mayu areas, the 28th Army ordered the Matsu Detachment to assume responsibility for the Kaladan front. The Detachment was composed of the Hq, 54th Infantry Group, the 111th Infantry Regiment (less the 2d Battalion), the 3d Battalion, 154th Infantry and the 2d Battalion, 54th Field Artillery Regiment with Maj. Gen. Koba as commander. The 55th Reconnaissance Regiment was temporarily attached.

In late November, Kaladan was evacuated by the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment while the Matsu Detachment made a counterattack to check the enemy at Tinma, the southern end of the Kaladan defile. In mid-December, however, another enemy force attempted an advance through the mountains to the east. The Matsu Detachment was forced to turn east to meet this new threat while the 55th Reconnaissance Regiment fought a delaying action north of Kyauktaw.

#### Withdrawal of the Sakura Detachment

While the Matsu Detachment fought in the Kaladan area, the badly outnumbered Sakura Detachment had been resisting doggedly, forcing the enemy to battle for every inch of advance. On 10 December, the Detachment relinquished the Hill 162-Buthidaung area and took up positions on the south bank of the Saingdin River, but continued to

hold the line west of Hparabyin, to the west.

In late December, Maj. Gen. T. Sakurai suggested to Lt. Gen. S. Sakurai that the Detachment was reaching the limit of its endurance. Considering that the mission of the Sakura Detachment had virtually been accomplished, the Army commander ordered its withdrawal to Prome. The withdrawal from the area which the Japanese had held for two and a half years was begun on 26 December. On New Year's Eve, Maj. Gen. T. Sakurai and his men crossed the Kaladan River and, by the 4th, were concentrated south of Myohaung being covered by the Matsu Detachment. The Sakura Detachment then moved to Prome where it was awarded a citation by the 28th Army commander for having successfully checked two enemy divisions from August through December.

#### Final Preparations for the Kan Operation

While the Sakura and Matsu Detachments checked the enemy in the north, other 28th Army units were able to make preparations for the final decisive battles to determine the fate of south western Burma.

#### Fortification Construction

The 28th Army headquarters planned the fortifications to be used in the expected main battles as well as those over which the Army felt it expedient to exercise control. All other fortifications in the designated defense areas were the responsibility of the subordinate units. In general, defense positions were to be of the field type, with key

installations to have medium cover capable of withstanding 200-kg bombs or a concentrated attack by 15-cm guns. Construction work would be accomplished by the troops with the aid of local labor. The Army encountered great difficulty in performing the necessary construction work due to the monsoon season and because enemy air interference in many areas meant that work on positions could only be done at night.

In spite of difficulties, however, the work progressed and, during late 1944 and early 1945, the following fortifications were completed by the 28th Army:

1. In the Arakan Mountain Range, along the Prome-Taungup Road.<sup>3</sup>
2. In the Arakan Mountain Range, along the Minbu-Tamandu Road.
3. In the area around Yenangyaung, including Chauk and Seikpyu.

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3. During the time the Arakan Range fortifications were being planned, some 28th Army staff officers criticized the plan; since the positions lay behind the 54th Division, they felt that the construction would have an adverse affect on 54th Division morale. The Army commander, however, recognized the possibility that the 15th Army might fail to bring the Ban Operation to a successful conclusion and the consequent necessity of the 54th Division being required to withdraw across the Arakan Range.

4. In the vicinity of Allamyo (considered as a strong point for defense against enemy airborne units).

5. In the environs of Mt. Popa.

6. In the vicinity of Prome (for protection of line of communications installations).

7. In the environs of Rangoon (for defense against amphibious attack).

8. Along the southwestern coastal area (for defense against amphibious attack).

#### Communications

Because of the necessity for closely coordinated operations, special emphasis was placed on the establishment and maintenance of communications. It was, however, extremely difficult to complete communications nets in such a vast and undeveloped territory. In addition, material was in short supply and although the 28th Army had an element of the Area Army Signal Unit attached, it had no organic signal units and was required to rely almost entirely on existing lines for wire communications.

#### Road Construction

A large-scale program of road construction and improvement was undertaken to meet the requirements of the Army (Map No. 8). Particular emphasis was laid on the Rangoon-Prome-Yenangyaung Road, the Prome-Taungup road, the Henzada-Bassein Road and the

Minbu-Tamandu Road as the main arteries for the movement of 28th Army. The Minbu-Tamandu Road had been started by the 20th Field Road Construction Unit in June 1944 and was completed in January 1945. Other newly constructed roads included the Paungde-Toungoo Road, begun by the 67th Independent Engineer Battalion in September 1944 and roughly completed in March 1945 and the Okshitpin-Henzada Road which had been started in October 1944 using native labor and was roughly completed in January 1945.

At important crossing points of the Irrawaddy and other large rivers in the region, ferrying facilities were prepared and engineer river crossing units were assigned to the points.

#### Ordnance Materiel

Because of the disruption of supply lines from Japan, weapons and ammunition were in short supply and the Army was hard put to equip its subordinate units from the supplies on hand. The need for antitank mines was particularly acute and 28th Army made frequent requests of higher headquarters for supplies of these defense weapons. Failing to receive any supplies of munitions from higher headquarters, the 28th Army was forced to prepare antitank mines and other needed explosives by removing the charges from aerial bombs. As a last resort, the Army urgently requested an air shipment of detonating fuzes but they were not forthcoming either and the supply of antitank mines assembled by the Army was completely inadequate.

## Training

Because of the greatly superior enemy strength and equipment as well as the nature of the operational areas, it was foreseen that many aspects of the coming combat would differ radically from normal procedures. Since existing training manuals did not provide the training information necessary to prepare 28th Army units for future operations, the Army prepared the following special manuals to fit the particular needs of the situation:

- Manual for Antitank Action
- Manual for Raiding Action
- Manual for Combat Against Airborne Units
- Manual for Coastal Defense
- Manual for Attack on Defense Perimeters
- Manual for Air Defense

Although there was undoubtedly some dogmatic theory included in the new training manuals, on the whole they were practical and geared to current conditions. The Army conducted many map and terrain exercises for the officers of its subordinate units in efforts to effect thoroughly realistic training. The fact that the Army forces were so widely dispersed, however, militated against providing sufficient training and the results of the training program fell short of expectations.

## Start of the Kan Operation

### 54th Division Operations Plan

The operations plan of the 54th Division called for holding as long as possible north and west of the Myebon-Mt. Yoma line as well as on the principal coastal islands. It would secure the Myebon-Mt. Yoma-Dalet River triangle with its main force and the Taungup sector with a strong element. Any enemy force which might land south of Myebon would be attacked by the nearest available units. The areas around An and Taungup would be secured under all circumstances and enemy advances toward the Arakan Mountain Range would be checked.

To defend the key points in the 54th Division's zone of responsibility, a series of defense units were formed:

#### Matsu Detachment: Commander, Maj. Gen. Koba

Hq, 54th Inf Gp  
111th Inf Regt (less 2d Bn)  
3d Bn, 154th Inf Regt  
2d Bn, 54th Fld Arty Regt (less 4th Btry)  
One co, 54th Engr Regt

#### Myebon Sector Unit: Commander, Lt. Col. Nakamura

54th Recon Regt (less 1st, 3d & 4th Cos)  
1st Co, 154th Inf Regt  
One plat, 54th Fld Arty Regt

#### Kangaw Sector Unit: Commander, Col. Murayama

154th Inf Regt (less 3d Bn)  
1st Bn, 54th Fld Arty Regt  
2d Btry, 3d Hv Fld Arty Regt

Tamandu Sector Unit: Commander, Lt. Col. Nakao

14th AT Gun Bn (less 2d and 3d Btrys)  
9th Co, 111th Inf Regt  
9th Co, 121st Inf Regt

Kywegu Sector Unit: Commander, Col. Tanaka

2d Bn, 111th Inf Regt (less one co)  
4th Btry, 54th Fld Arty Regt  
Hq, 54th Div Med Unit

Taungup Sector Unit: Commander, Col. Nagasawa

121st Inf Regt (less 9th Co)  
4th Co, 54th Recon Regt  
3d Bn, 54th Fld Arty Regt  
3d Co, 54th Engr Regt  
3d Btry, 14th AT Bn

Units Under Direct Division Command

Hq, 54th Fld Arty Regt  
54th Engr Regt (less elms)  
1st & 3d Cos, 54th Recon Regt  
54th Trans Regt

The Matsu Detachment, in cooperation with the Sakura Detachment, would hold the enemy in the Kaladan River Basin with its main force and, with an element, secure the Akyab sector. After covering the anticipated withdrawal of the Sakura Detachment, it would withdraw to and hold in the vicinity of Myohaung. Efforts would be made to limit the intensity of the fighting in the Myohaung area.

In holding the coastal islands, emphasis would be placed on Ramree Island, with only guard units being deployed on the other islands. River mouths that offered landing opportunities to enemy amphibious forces would be blocked with engineer placed obstacles.



The Myebon, Kangaw and Tamandu Sector Units would make preparations for the northern front defense operation, including the organization of the defenses in the Myebon-Mt. Yoma-Dalet River triangle. The main position would be around Kangaw with another strong point around Myebon. Other defense positions would be built throughout the entire area. The enemy attack in this area would be checked at the main defensive zone and the attacking forces destroyed in a counterattack by the main striking force of the Division which would be formed from the Matsu Detachment and units drawn from other Sector Units. A minimum strength for the counterattack was estimated at five infantry and two artillery battalions.

The Taungup Sector Unit would check the enemy advance from prepared positions south of the Tanlwe River and north of the Thade River. Ramree Island would be secured as long as possible without resorting to a decisive battle.

The Kywegu Sector Unit, in the event of a large-scale enemy landing, would hold strong points along the coast until such time as the Division could launch a counterattack with its main force.

In the event that it should be necessary to transfer the main body of the Division east of the Arakan Mountain Range, a unit with two infantry battalions as a nucleus would remain in the Taungup sector and another unit comprised principally of one infantry battalion would remain in the An sector to check the enemy and delay movement against the Arakan Range defenses.

Abandonment of the Akyab-Myohaung Area (Gen. Ref. Map I)

Immediately after the conclusion of the 1944 monsoon season, the British XV Corps launched an offensive along the coast of the Bay of Bengal. The Sakura Detachment, which had been expected to check the enemy in the area west of the Kaladan River well into January, was forced to withdraw on 26 December and the 54th Division found itself defending the west coast area of Burma somewhat sooner than expected. The Sakura Detachment which was to concentrate in the environs of Prome, conducted an orderly withdrawal which was completed by the end of January. Prior to its move south, the Detachment transferred the bulk of its ammunition to the 54th Division and the Division planned to utilize the Sakura Detachment as a convoy force to transport rice from the Myohaung Plain for stockpiling in the rear. However, the early withdrawal of the Detachment and the fact that only native boats of limited capacity were available, made it impossible to complete the stockpiling operation.

The 1st Battalion of the 111th Infantry Regiment had been defending Akyab. On 31 December, as the rear guard of the Sakura Detachment crossed the Kaladan River and moved eastward the Battalion was ordered to withdraw after light fighting against British forces attacking from the north. A landing at Akyab was made by the enemy on 3 January, after the defending battalion had withdrawn to Ponnagyun.

The main body of the Matsu Detachment was fighting against the West African 81st Division in the sector north of Myohaung, covering

the right flank of the Sakura Detachment. The commander of the Matsu Detachment shifted the 3d Battalion of the 111th Infantry east from Tinma to cover the left flank of a composite battalion of the 111th which was operating on the west bank of the Lenro River.<sup>4</sup> As the enemy advanced south, the Matsu Detachment shortened its front and made efforts to hold the Myohaung area, aided by the 1st Battalion of the 111th Infantry, which had been withdrawn from Ponnagyun between 6 and 12 January. The rear of the Detachment was effectively protected by a composite infantry company, commanded by Capt. Yokota, which held at Minbya for about 20 days against a vastly superior enemy force which moved up from Akyab.<sup>5</sup>

#### Fighting in the Myebon Sector (Map No. 11)

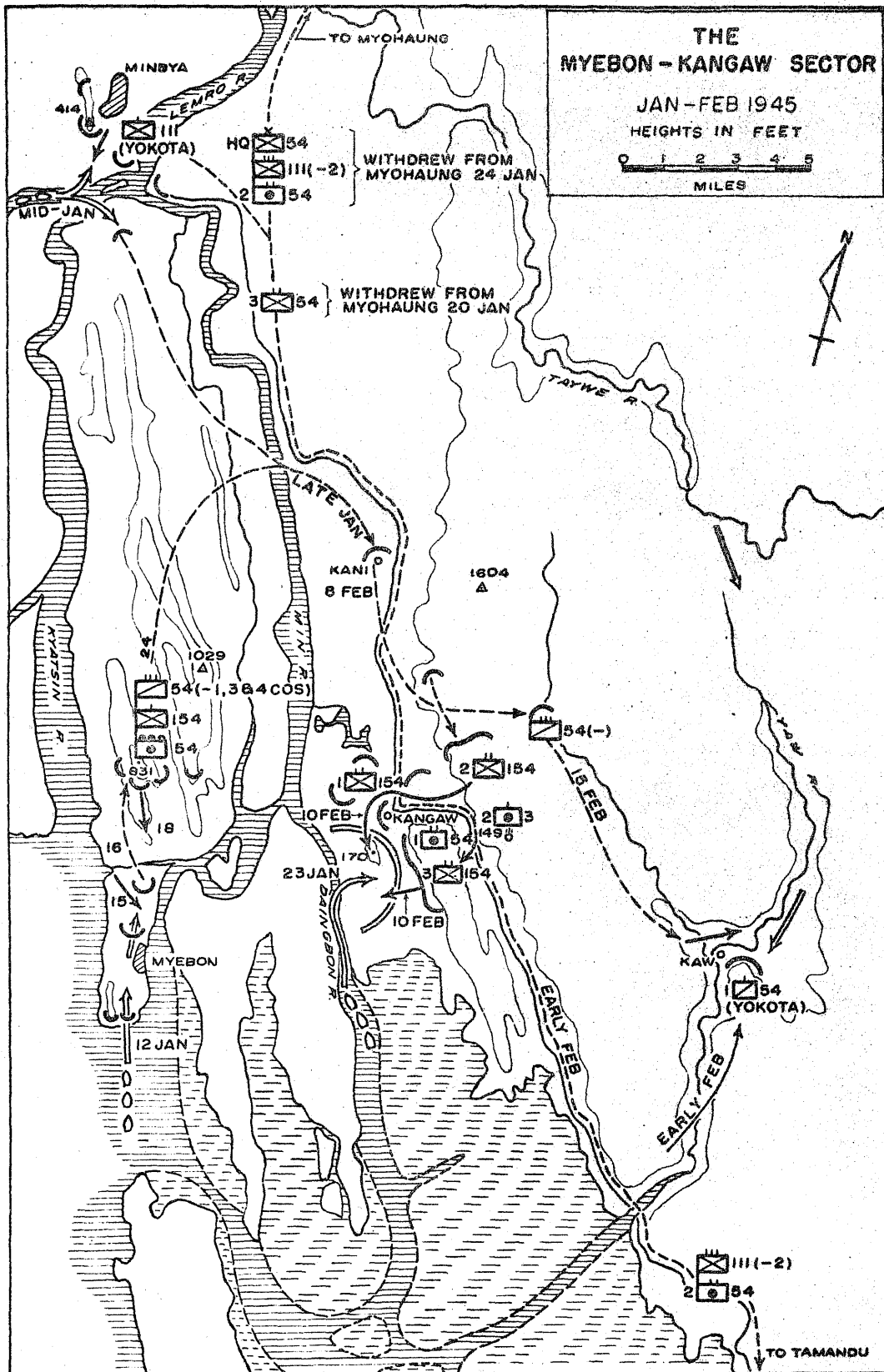
Under both air and naval cover, the British-Indian 25th Division commenced landing operations on the southern tip of the Myebon Peninsula at 1000 hours, 12 January 1945, using four large transports and 40 landing craft. The Myebon Sector Unit, under Lt. Col.

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4. The composite battalion was a temporary tactical unit composed of troops drawn from other battalions of the 111th Infantry Regiment.

5. Later, during the fighting in the Kangaw sector, Capt. Yokota commanded the 1st Reconnaissance Company securing the rear line of communications of the 54th Division against penetration by the enemy 81st Division in the vicinity of Kaw. For this, as well as his actions at Minbya, as commander of the composite infantry company, Capt. Yokota was awarded a posthumous citation by the commander of the 28th Army.

MAP NO. 11



Nakamura, was unable to hold against this strong force and was pressed back to the north of Myebon where the unit secured Hill 831 and held the enemy in check for about ten days. As reinforcements, the 54th Division sent one company of the 54th Reconnaissance Regiment from An and one infantry company from the Kangaw Sector Unit. En route, the two companies were cut-off by the enemy and failed to reach their destination. The Myebon Sector Unit was forced to withdraw across the Min River to Kani in late January, where it covered the withdrawal of the Matsu Detachment.

#### Loss of Ramree Island (Gen. Ref. Map I)

Ramree Island was garrisoned by the 2d Battalion of the 121st Infantry under the command of Maj. Inomata.

At 1005 hours on 21 January, following a heavy naval bombardment by 4 cruisers, 8 destroyers, 15 gunboats and 20 other ships and an air bombardment by 30 Consolidated bombers, 9 Lockheeds and 15 carrier planes, the main body of the British-Indian 26th Division, using a number of large transports and 55 landing craft, commenced landing operations near Kyaukpyu on the northern tip of the island. One infantry company with 25 pound guns succeeded in sinking several of the landing craft, but the landing was forced and the enemy advanced southward along the northern neck of the island. During the next few days, landings were made at Yameyaung, Cheduba Island and the southern tip of Ramree Island on the 23, 26 and 27 January

respectively. Maj. Inomata concentrated his force in the central part of the island, with his main strength in prepared positions south of the Yanbauk River, where he was successful in checking the enemy. The 26th Division then directed its main attack on Sane and moved against the defenders in the vicinity of Yanthitgyi on 7 February. Although 54th Division orders did not contemplate an all-out stand on Ramree, Maj. Inamoto determined to hold his positions to the last man. On 9 February, however, the 54th Division commander directed the garrison to withdraw to the mainland. Splitting up into small parties the Battalion began evacuation on the 18th, using native boats. Although the 5th Air Division supported the evacuation with about six aircraft, the command of the sea was so completely in enemy hands, that the withdrawal went badly. By the middle of March about 500 of the island's garrison had reached the mainland. Maj. Inomata presumably died in action.

#### Action in the Kangaw Sector (Map No. 11)

Concurrently with its attack on the Myebon Peninsula, the main body of the enemy 25th Division, accompanied by tanks, began a landing operation at Kangaw on 23 January, with strong naval and air cover. With the support of the 1st Battalion of the 54th Field Artillery, the 1st and 2d Battalions of the 154th Infantry counterattacked the invasion force but failed to halt the landing. The Division commander immediately ordered the Matsu Detachment from Myohaung and

the Myebon Sector Unit from Hill 831 to move to the vicinity of Kangaw to check the enemy's southward advance. The enemy advanced steadily and captured the main position of the Kangaw Sector Unit located on Hill 170. The 3d Battalion of the 154th Infantry, which had already been pulled out from the Matsu Detachment to reinforce the Kangaw Sector Unit, was en route from Myohaung and was the first of the reinforcing units to arrive. On 10 February a night attack was launched by the 2d and 3d Battalions of the 154th Infantry and Hill 170 was retaken. Shortly after, however, the 2d Battalion was forced off the hill and once more it fell into the hands of the enemy.

The West African 81st Division, which had captured Myohaung, advanced southward pursuing the Matsu Detachment. Attacking the Kangaw sector from the north and, at the same time, penetrating the eastern mountain area it advanced to the flank and rear of the Kangaw Sector Unit. Capt. Yokota, now commanding the 1st Reconnaissance Company, rushed his unit to Kaw to cover the exposed right flank and checked the enemy advance in the rear of the Sector Unit.

#### Defense of the Tamandu-An Sector (Map No. 12)

In late January, the 28th Army chief of staff arrived to direct 54th Division operations. In early February there were indications that the British-Indian 26th Division, which had almost completed





the securing of Ramree Island, would make a landing south of Tamandu and the 54th Division was forced to move its main battle positions to the sector south of the Dalet River. The Matsu Detachment was directed to rush to Tamandu and, on 15 February, the Kangaw Sector Unit was withdrawn to positions west and north of the Dalet River, just north of Tamandu.

#### New 54th Division Plan

After studying the over-all situation in late January, the 54th Division commander decided it would be possible to crush the enemy land and sea attack on the Tamandu-An sector. To accomplish this feat, the following plan was developed:

##### Operational Policy:

After making efforts to crush the enemy in the area north and west of the Dalet River and in the coastal area between Tamandu and Kywegu, the Division will assemble all uncommitted units in the vicinity of An. Using these units as a Division striking force a counteroffensive will be launched to wipe out the enemy west of An. The Taungup sector will continue to be secured by a strong force. Another force will secure key points in the Arakan Range to check enemy advances east of the Range.

##### Operational Program:

###### 1. First Phase:

The Tamandu sector will be firmly held as the key position to separate the enemy advancing from the north and the enemy force which is expected to land south of Tamandu. The strongest defense effort will be concentrated on the northern front. The main body of the Kangaw Sector Unit will conduct a delaying action in with-

drawing to the sector north and west of the Dalet River. There, designated as the Right Defense Unit, it will be responsible for the defense of the northern front. Holding actions will be conducted in the coastal area south of Tamandu.

## 2. Second Phase:

In the event that the enemy penetrates the front line and moves toward the east, the main body of the Division will counterattack while holding the vicinity of Kolan as a key position. Following the counterattack, the Division will occupy key points west of An with an element and the striking force will regroup in the vicinity of An. At the first opportunity the Division will launch a general offensive.

After the withdrawal of the Division to the vicinity of An, elements will be deployed at key points on the trails through the Arakan Mountains to prevent enemy penetrations.

### Task Force Organization:

The Sector Units, except the Taungup Sector Unit, will be dissolved and the following defense units will be formed:

#### Right Defense Unit

154th Inf Regt (less 1st & 2d Bns)  
54th Recon Regt (less 3d & 4th Cos)

#### Center Defense Unit

111th Inf Regt (less 2d & 3d Bns)  
14th AT Bn (less 2d and 3d Btrys)

#### Left Defense Unit

2d Bn, 111th Inf Regt  
Hq, Med Unit, 54th Div

The 54th Artillery Regiment (less the 1st and 3d Battalions) will furnish artillery support to the Center Defense Unit and the 3d Battalion of the 111th Infantry Regiment will be held in reserve. The 54th Engineer Regiment and the 54th Transport Unit will be placed under direct command of the Division.

### Continued British Attacks

In late February, an element of the British-Indian 25th Division advanced southward along the coast south of Kangaw and the West African 81st and 82d Divisions also moved toward the south from the mountains east of Kangaw. The Right Defense Unit met both forces north of the Dalet River but was unable to prevent their advance to the river.

To the south, on 16 February the main body of the enemy 25th Division landed in the vicinity of Dokekan. The Center Defense Unit counterattack was ineffective and, with the support of naval and air bombardment, the enemy rapidly enlarged the beachhead. Infiltrating into the sector just west of Hill 990 with a powerful column, the 25th Division threatened to cut the Japanese line of communications on the Tamandu-An Road toward the end of February. The balance of the enemy force from Dokekan attacked Tamandu from the south, in cooperation with another enemy group which landed near Tamandu on 3 March.

By the end of February, the village of Dalet had fallen into enemy hands. The 54th Infantry Group Headquarters, the 1st and 2d

Battalions of the 154th Infantry Regiment and the 1st Battalion of the 54th Field Artillery Regiment, which were ordered by 28th Army to move east of the Arakan Range left Kolan on 26 February.

#### The Counteroffensive - First Phase

As the first step in countering the British successes, the Division commander decided to conduct a drive in the area west of Hill 990. On 3 March, the Center Defense Unit was reinforced by the Division reserve (3d Battalion, 111th Infantry) and ordered to attack the enemy column that had moved to the rear of the Tamandu positions. This force, commanded by Col. Yagi, succeeded in turning back the enemy after a series of engagements between 7 and 17 March. Thereafter, the British-Indian 25th Division troops in that area assumed the defensive.

Meanwhile, the Right Defense Unit had also made counterattacks that were successful in checking the enemy's advance beyond the Dalet River. In the central sector, along the Tamandu-Kolan Road, superior enemy strength forced a gradual but steady Japanese withdrawal and, by the middle of March, the British forces had penetrated to the vicinity of Kolan.

#### The Counteroffensive - Second Phase

The Right Defense Unit continued to hold in the vicinity of the Dalet River and prevented the two British forces from joining. The 54th Division commander, taking advantage of this split in the enemy

forces, launched an attack against Kolan on 23 March. Although the attack, carried out by the Right Defense Unit from the north and the 111th Infantry Regiment (less the 2d Battalion) from the south, was moderately successful, the Division commander considered that the time had come to prepare for the second phase of the Division plan. While the 3d Battalion of the 111th Infantry, in positions along a north and south line based on Hill 990, acted as a general outpost, the Division completed regrouping in the vicinity of An by the end of March. In the regrouping, two attacking forces were formed:

Right Column: Commander, Col. Murayama

154th Inf Regt (less 1st & 2d Bns)  
7th Co, 111th Inf Regt  
9th Co, 121st Inf Regt  
54th Recon Regt (less 3d & 4th Cos)  
One btry, 54th Fld Arty Regt  
One engr plat

Left Column: Commander, Col. Yagi

111th Inf Regt (less 3d Bn & 7th Co)  
One btry, 54th Fld Arty Regt

On 7 April, as the battalion outpost at Hill 990 was being extended to the utmost, the 54th Division shifted to the offensive. The counteroffensive was conceived as a two pronged attack against the area between Letmauk and Hill 990, with the Right Column driving between Letmauk and Hill 990 and the Left Column swinging south of Hill 990. Under heavy pressure, the enemy began to withdraw on the night of the 8th and the Division commander ordered the two columns to pursue the enemy toward Tamandu. The 2d Battalion of the

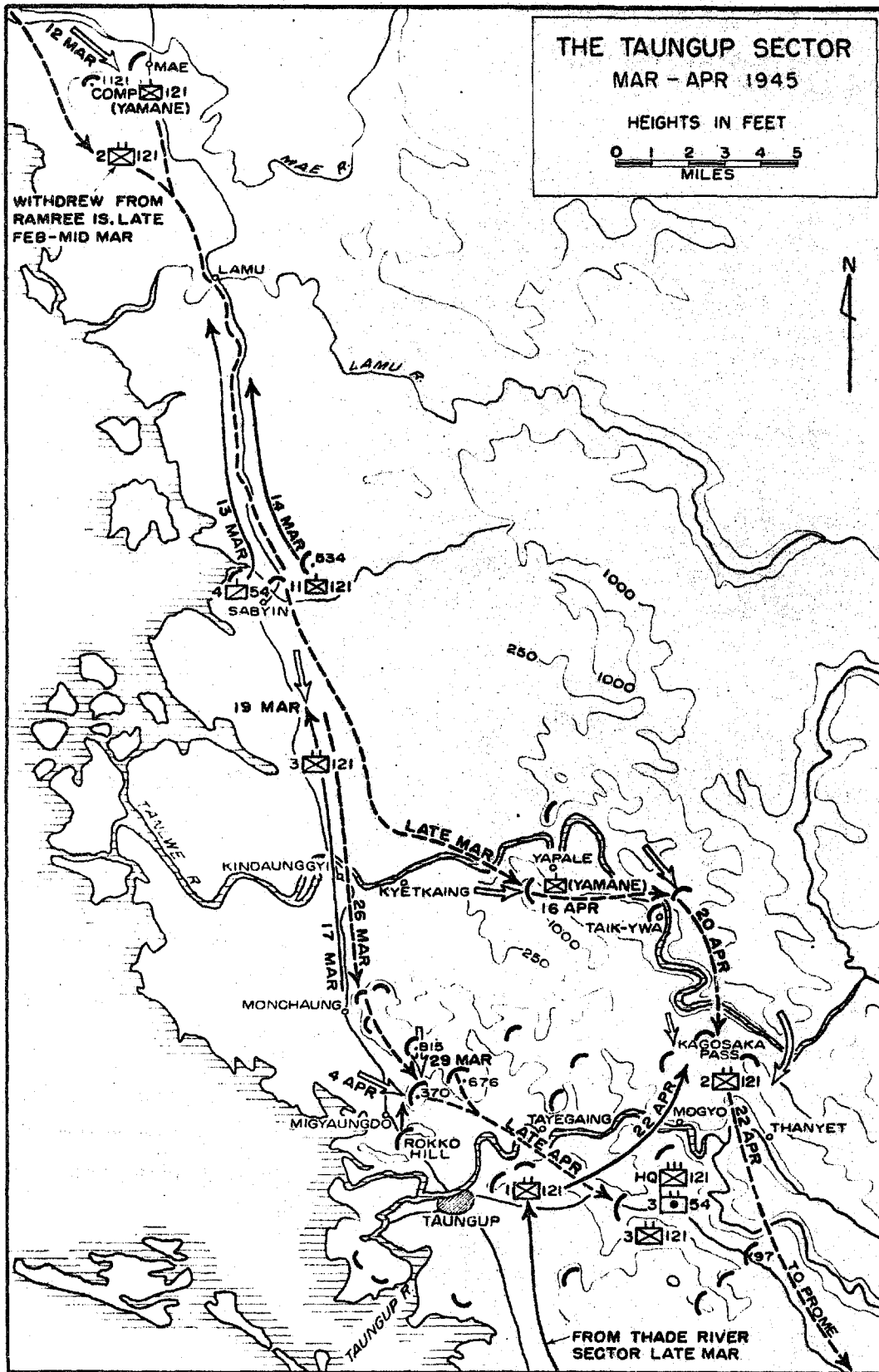
11th succeeded in outflanking the enemy and occupied Shaukchon on the 12th to cut off routes of retreat. The battalion, however, was unable to hold control of the road until the main striking force of the Division could arrive.

In spite of the favorable progress of the counteroffensive, the 54th Division was compelled to suspend the action on 15 April owing to the critical situation which had developed east of the Arakan Mountain Range. Orders from the 28th Army directed the Division to regroup east of An to prepare for further operations on the Irrawaddy River.

#### Fighting in the Taungup Sector (Map No. 13)

Following its occupation of Ramree Island, the British-Indian 26th Division commenced landing operations at Mae on 12 March. The Yamane Composite Company, assigned to that area to cover the withdrawal of the Ramree Island garrison (2d Battalion, 121st Infantry), immediately counterattacked but was driven off without stopping the enemy's landing operations. Thereafter, the Composite Company conducted a delaying action designed to slow the enemy's southward advance. The enemy force, now numbering more than 1,000, was equipped with tanks and too strong for the Composite Company to hold. The Company was reinforced by the 4th Company (light armored cars) of the 54th Reconnaissance Regiment dispatched from Sabyin on 13 March.

MAP NO. 13



On the 14th the 11th Company of the 121st was also dispatched from Hill 534.

Another force of the 26th Division was conducting landing operations near Mae and it was feared that it too, would move against Taungup. On 17 March, Lt. Col. Baba, commander of the 121st Infantry, sent the 3d Battalion from Taungup to hit the enemy in the Sabyin area and hold it along the Tanlwe River as long as possible. The Battalion met the 26th Division force south of Sabyin on the 19th and, in a sharp engagement, inflicted heavy losses. <sup>6</sup>

Because the dispatch of the 3d Battalion had greatly reduced strength in the Taungup sector, the 1st Battalion of the 121st was moved from the Thade River north to Taungup. The 2d Battalion and the Yamane Composite Company were directed to move northeast of Taungup to hold the upper reaches of the Tanlwe River. By the end of March the Yamane Company occupied positions around Yapale and the 2d Battalion was in the sector north of Mogyo.

In the meantime, the enemy 26th Division had established beachheads near Kyetkaing and Kindaunggyi on the Tanlwe River and was, apparently receiving air support, using airstrips behind their lines. By 27 March, the 3d Battalion of the 121st had withdrawn to positions already established north of the Taungup River, where it successfully

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6. Lt. Col. Baba replaced Col. Nagasawa who was appointed commander of the 55th Infantry Group in early March.



employed favorable terrain to check the enemy briefly. On the 29th, however, the 26th Division force, supported by tanks, artillery and aircraft captured Hill 815, a key defensive point overlooking the Taungup Plain. On the 31st the enemy also made an attack on Rokko Hill, south of Migyaungdo, but was driven off.

Starting about 3 April, the enemy directed its main effort along the Taungup Road. In a coordinated attack, employing tanks, artillery and air to support the infantry, Hill 370 was taken on 4 April. A night counterattack, conducted by the Kurihama Company which had garrisoned Hill 370, failed to recapture it. The Kominami Company, garrisoning Rokko Hill, also conducted repeated attacks in an effort to regain Hill 370. The Kominami Company was eventually successful in achieving its objective, although at a terrific cost - almost every man in the company, including the company commander, was either killed or wounded. The 121st Regiment then abandoned Rokko Hill in order to shorten its front. The enemy made repeated attempts to recapture Hill 370 but was beaten back with heavy losses and, abandoning its attempts to recapture the Hill, shifted its main attacking force to the upper Tanlwe River sector.

On 15 April the enemy force, approximately 2,000 strong, commenced an attack along the Tanlwe River. Although the Yamane Composite Company fought desperately, it was unable to hold the vastly stronger enemy force. The Company withdrew from Yapale to Taikywa on 16 April from which point it launched counterattacks for four

days, but was finally forced back to Kagosaka Pass on the 20th. At the same time, the 3d Battalion of the 121st which had been holding on the north bank of the Taungup River was pressed back across the river.

On 21 April, the 2d Battalion of the 121st was transferred to the vicinity of Allanmyo and placed under the direct command of the 28th Army. The Regimental commander replaced the 2d Battalion, in the Mogyo area, with the 1st Battalion. On the 24th, enemy light armored cars appeared on the front north of Kagosaka Pass and on the 25th an attack by about 2,000 British troops, preceded by artillery and air bombardment, was successful in taking one corner of the Kagosaka Pass position. Repeated night counterattacks, however, resulted in the position being retaken.

On 29 April, the 121st Infantry Regiment (less 2d Battalion) with the 3d Battalion of the 54th Artillery Regiment was placed under the direct command of 28th Army and received orders to withdraw to Okpo.