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# Dark Horse on Iwo

The 3dMarDiv, in the floating reserve at Iwo Jima, didn't go ashore on D-day. But when it did, it surged across the island in powerful drives that had the punch of coordinated supporting arms. By Maj R. D. Heintz Jr.

*This is the story of a Marine division which nobody thought would land—the floating reserve which might be employed piecemeal, but for which there would be no room as a unit. And this is how it landed and how it fought.*

*This is the story of the Third Marine Division at Iwo Jima.*

IT has been estimated that news correspondents ground out 1,168,575 words during the Iwo Jima battle. How many times the phrases “black volcanic sands, sulphur-fumes, lava crags, labyrinthine caves” and the like were repeated can never be estimated. These repetitions sprang from an inability to convey to anyone not present just what Iwo was. Hell-hole is mild; the pioneers who first saw the Badlands of the West had a better description: hell with the fire out. That is close. To visualize Iwo, take a look at the worst of our American deserts and multiply by two.

To a military eye, Iwo Jima is shaped like an unbalanced dumb-bell, with Mt Suribachi at one end joined by a long, narrow ridge to a considerable land-mass at the other, the long axis of the island running generally northeast-southwest. The terrain, where not composed of volcanic sand-dunes originally anchored by scrub growth, is solid lava, full of unholy crevices and jagged edges and caves. A few islands and reefs lie off Iwo. Of these, the only ones worth mentioning are Kama and Kangoku Rocks, both of which are less than a mile off the northwest shore. Kangoku, which means prison, was the island brig, the subject of many a wise-crack; it was as if hell had a sub-basement.

In describing Jap positions or defensive organizations of the ground, many terms lose their meaning. There were no lines, no perimeters. Iwo was one solid, coordinated defense, the density of which has never been exceeded in any objective taken by American arms.

Against air attack, there were 120-mm naval guns (dual-purpose, at that; the sort mounted aboard destroyers and in the secondary batteries of larger ships), twin 25-mm automatic cannon in profusion, and any number of smaller AA automatic weapons. For coast and beach defense, the enemy relied upon 6-inch and 4.7-inch guns (not to men-



21st Marines entered the attack on 22 Feb.

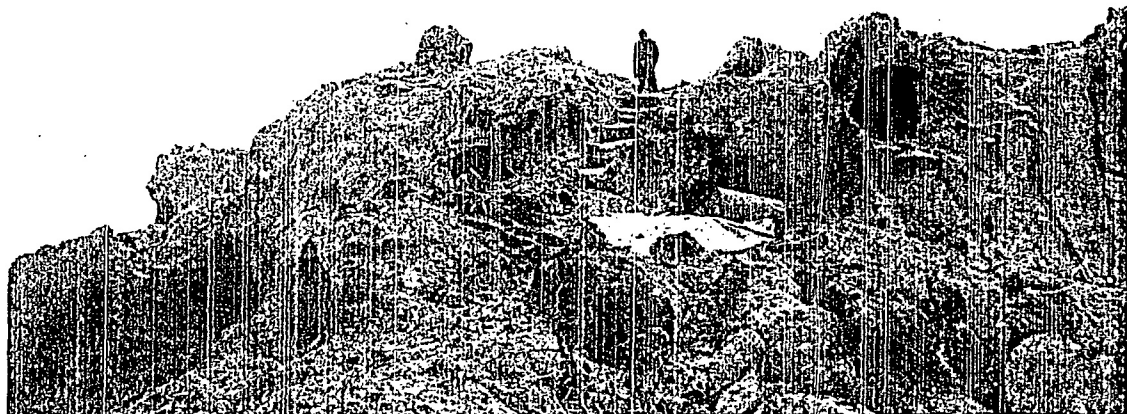
tion many less formidable calibers) casemated into massive emplacements with six and eight feet of reinforced concrete surrounding them, and set in rock and sand. Over the entire island was an interlocking set of caves, dug-in tanks, pillboxes, and block-houses, each supporting the other and all covering minefields. Remarkable fields of fire and observation were afforded by the airstrips. To top all, there were giant mortars and rocket-positions. Heretofore, the 320-mm spigot mortar, with its 670-pound shell, or the rocket buzz bomb, had been abstractions in intelligence summaries. On Iwo, they turned up in three dimensions.

That was Iwo Jima—a tiny volcanic atom, stinking of sulphur, not worth 50 cents at a sheriff's sale, five miles long and three miles wide—but 700 miles from Tokyo.

To overpower the estimated 14,000 Nips on Iwo, it was planned to employ two divisions of the V Amphibious Corps, landing abreast on the so-called East Beaches (actually southeast), with another division, the Third, afloat in reserve.

The two divisions landing in initial assault, the Fourth (on the right) and Fifth, would secure a beachhead, cut across the narrow neck of land just

◀ CC, FMF-Pac—LtGen Roy Stanley Geiger



**Twin 25-mm AA lay hidden in caves of honeycombed Hill 200-P, where Jap marines staged their fanatic defense against the Ninth. Their cannon swept Airfield No. 2.**

below Suribachi Yama (as one might nip off the triangular head of a snake), and then turn, so that the two divisions, less a regiment, would face northeast, up the long axis of Iwo. The extra regiment from the Fifth would reduce Suribachi.

To soften the island, the Strategic Air Force had devoted 74 days of high-altitude bombing, but the real grinding was to be provided by three days of intense bombardment by a battleship and cruiser task force. After one look, the commander of this force decided he had enough to do just making a landing possible, let alone giving the rest of Iwo Jima a point-for-point drubbing.

What was not understood in the preliminaries, and could never have been anticipated, was the incredible density of defense, and the jam-packing of Jap troops on the island. And when, a few days before landing, these factors became apparent, estimates altered radically. It was simple arithmetic: if there were 20,000 Japs on Iwo, one-third more than our estimates, it would require more marines—Third Division troops.

Even the weather helped make landings on 19 Feb successful. So well had Admiral Blandy's task force, and carrier-aviation, done their jobs, that the two divisions stormed ashore almost without opposition. The Fifth Division, in a swirling advance behind the rolling curtain of naval gunfire, crossed the island before nightfall, but the Fourth was already receiving heavy indirect fires of mortars and artillery upon its beaches.

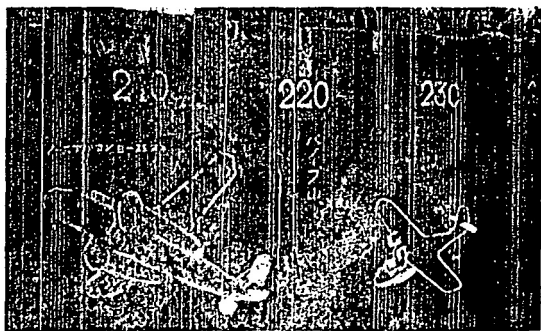
Supply would be difficult across the debris-choked black sand which seemed to swallow up every sort of vehicle except LVTs. And casualties were beginning to mount. All too plainly, it might be necessary to order in one regiment from the Third. On 20 Feb, therefore, the 21st Marines boated for landing to reinforce the Fourth Division.

Meanwhile, the weather turned. Winds rose and clouds hung low. On the beaches, where unloading was hampered by sand and embarrassed by con-

tinual indirect fire, mounting seas delayed progress. Although the 21st was boated and ready to land, it became necessary to delay it offshore for miserable hours of wet, seasickness and cold. By night, the men were happy to reembark (all but a few misérables too seasick to climb back aboard ship). They spent the night in the LCMs.

Next day, 21 Feb, things moved better, and, by 1800, the regiment was ashore and in an assembly-area, under the lee of the south edge of No. 1 Airfield. Enemy harassing fires, always attentive to the beaches, were unusually so this night, with rockets, giant mortars, and all calibers of artillery. But not a casualty was suffered.

Next morning, before dawn, the regiment began relief of the 23d Marines, which was holding precariously to the sandy crest overlooking Airfield No. 1. Heavy fires impeded the relief, and the regiment narrowly missed a tardy jumpoff; but at 0835, with the 1st and 2d Bns abreast, the attack was launched. From the outset, it was a slugging-match. Enemy pillboxes and bunkers seemed to be dug into every sand-dune. Going was uphill. Every yard was covered by such enemy weapons as the nest of twin 25-mm antiaircraft cannon in the center of the



**In the emplacements were chalk murals depicting every known kind of U. S. plane.**

zone, or the stoutly-held Navy battery position of 120-mm dual-purpose guns (which had to be taken by flamethrowers and riflemen after the guns had long been knocked out). By nightfall, the 2d Bn had shouldered forward on the left to within 200 yards or so of the jutting southwest end of Airfield No. 2. On the right, it was anybody's battle, with hardly more than 50 yards to show for a hard day's work.

Dislodging the enemy from the end of the field would be a prime requisite if the right battalion were to advance up the concave amphitheater formed by the intersecting runways, let alone accomplish a crossing of the strips, swept as they were by flat-trajectory fire from machine-guns and light antiaircraft weapons sited to the north on such commanding ground as Hills 199-O and 200-P, and Hill 382.

Thus, the morning's fight by the 2d Bn (English) was a series of attempts to get up onto, or around, the steep sandy runway-end, while Williams of the 1st Bn, pinned down by automatic weapons and pillboxes, remained virtually in place until after 0930. By the day's end, after a furious assault, the left of the 21st Marines was hooked around the curved embankment, and the right, so long held down, had muscled into the angle of the converged runways. The 1st Bn was, for the time being, spent, and the 3d (Duplantis) launched the next morning's attack. Mission and objective: to get across the east-west airstrip.

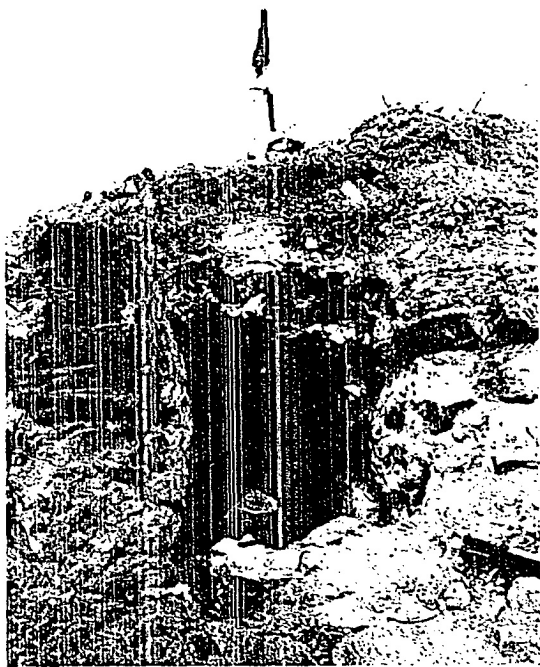
It was 24 Feb, at about 1300, that men of the 3d Bn, 21st Marines, after three attempts, managed to cross that fireswept hundred yards to the far side. Tanks of the Fourth and Fifth Divisions during the morning had made massed attacks up the north-east-southwest runway. What the tankers learned (the hard way) was that high-velocity, hollow-charge 47-mm antitank guns commanded every inch of the narrow strip, and that the Nips had laid two-horned mines all the way. When the tank attacks ground to a stop, the flaming wrecks, some of them with neat round holes punched in their skins, others with tracks and bogeys sprawled about, remained behind, derelict. Clearly this job would be for riflemen. For example, Company K of the 21st Marines: Flattened out against the fill along the runway-side, scouts, then rifle teams, would spring up. The Jap would hold his fire, and more marines would follow. Then, halfway across, on land as flat as a parade-ground, the Nips would cut loose with rifles, machine-guns, mortars, everything; and what was left would stagger back again. That happened twice. The third time, they made it.

Holding the far side was not easy. There were two enemy counterattacks during the afternoon. Neither can be described as perfunctory, and there was infighting with grenades and cold steel in the broken, sandy flat just north of the center of the field. But by late afternoon, not only was the 3d

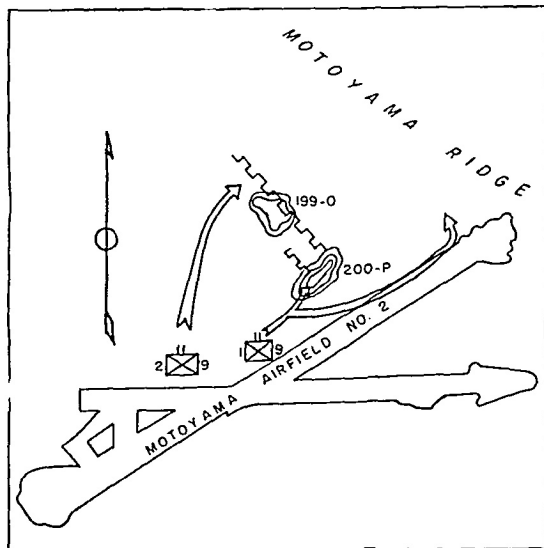
Bn firmly established across the runway, but the 2d Bn, whose battle around the end of the strip had continued, managed to get one company forward into the taxiways and plane-revetments to the left rear of Duplantis' men. The position would be held.

Meanwhile, the Third Division, after hours of exasperating inactivity afloat, had received the word: "You will land on 24 February (still less the Third Marines), assume control of the whilom zone of the 21st Marines (now reverting to parent division), and continue the attack." The Third was in the fight.

THE ridges of upper Iwo form a horseshoe or U, with the two sides paralleled across the Division's line of attack, and commanding as well the zones of the Fourth and Fifth Divisions to right and left. Insert Motoyama Village (now a road-junction and a heap of rubble) in the deep curving bottom of the U, and Airfield No. 3 farther to left (northwest), and still inside the interior depression. Atop the first ridge, and on its forward slopes, visualize a closely organized defensive position; imagine bunkers, pillboxes, minefields, a profusion of flat-trajectory antitank and antiaircraft automatic cannon, the whole backed up by mortars in the treacherous gullies and crevices on the rearward slope. To make it vivid, add heaps of sulphur-ash, hot volcanic pot-holes, and steam and smoke puffing from the ground. Upon Motoyama Ridge, just described, rested one of the enemy's main positions. "a fortress-like defensive organization," the Division war-diary comments. "likened only to that encoun-



Deep caves in rock hills made the going rugged before the 21st's break-through.

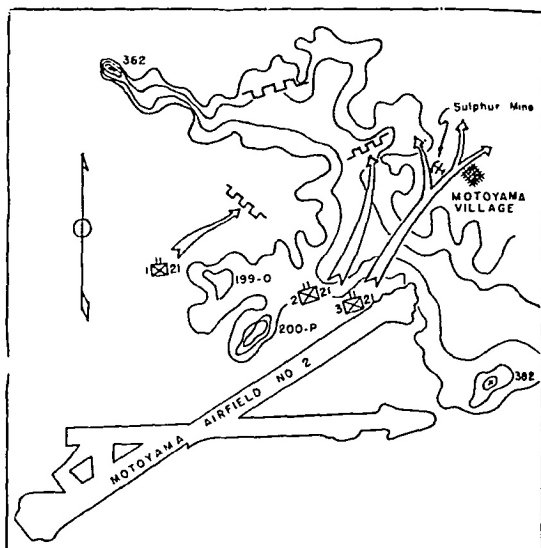


On 27 Feb the Ninth struck twice—it worked.

tered in the lines of World War I or in the great fortified sectors of the present European war."

Although the fighting of 26 Feb, with the Ninth Marines now carrying the ball, had yielded scant yardage, the nature of the ground taken was critical. The cave-riddled hills at 199-O and 200-P, the one with its battery of 120-mm naval guns and the other with fanatically-defended twin 25-mm anti-aircraft guns, had impeded the Division's advance through the entire zone and provided a formidable outwork to the ridge-lines forward of Motoyama Village. Both hills were more or less in the hands of the Ninth Marines, with Cushman (2d Bn) on the left, and Randall, with his 1st Bn on the right. Cushman was extended among the caves, grottoes and bunkers, while Randall bestrode the airstrip, looking up the ridge.

On 27 Feb, the first of many intense artillery and naval gunfire preparations was stacked in front of the Ninth as they continued the attack. With 105s, plus Corps 155s, and 5-inchers from destroyers, Cushman managed to make 150 yards on the left, only to be stopped by flanking fire from his right, where the 1st Bn was still pinned down in front of the battered airfield radio-weather station. By noon, it was decided to repeat the preparation, and attack



The 21st Marines broke through on 28 Feb.

again. Everything, it was reasoned, depended upon the assault units moving out on the heels of the preparation. So at 1250 on 27 Feb, the regiment again attacked:

It worked: by nightfall, Cushman had moved 600 yards, and Randall had possession of 200-P and the balance of 199-O. Had it not been for by-passed snipers—Nip marines, who died hard in the crevices of 200-P—the attack might have surged still further, but fire from the hills in rear discouraged the advance—mopping up would require two more days before a man could walk upright in that area.

The fighting on the 27th had exhausted the Ninth Marines. Since the Division still had no reserve—the Third Marines being held out afloat as Expeditionary Troops Reserve—the 21st went in again the next morning, 28 Feb, with the 1st Bn on the left and the 3d Bn on the right. From the previous day's combination of weapons supporting the main effort, Gen Erskine hit upon a further refinement: after King-hour, a rolling barrage let the assault units move out behind a rapidly-advancing curtain.

It was terrific. For 49 minutes, the concentration of 105s, 155s, 5, 6, and 8-inch bursts rolled forward. Supporting the jumpoff was every infantry weapon



Marines of the 21st jump off toward Airfield No. 2 in the early days of the battle.

in each regiment, pouring in mortar and automatic weapons fire between the barrage and the riflemen. On the left, an immediate advance of over 200 yards was made by Williams before the stunned Japs could begin to deliver intense mortarfire from behind the ridge. Duplantis, on the right, surged forward and was on the high ground at the upper end of Airfield No. 2 before noon—the nest from which Nip 47-mm antitank guns had knocked out Evans' tanks.

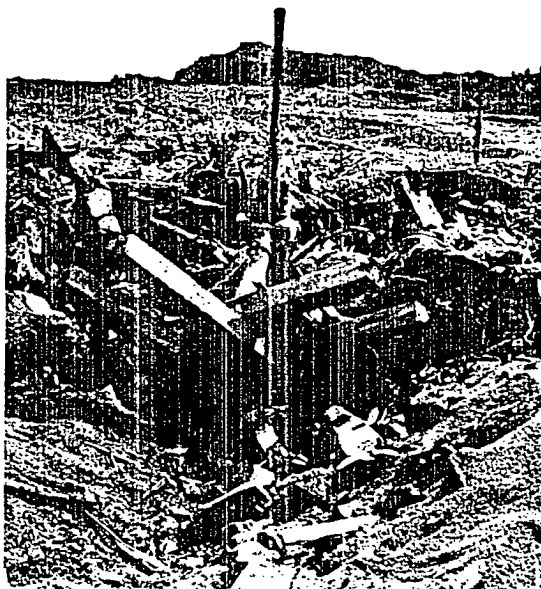
Impetus of this attack must not be lost. A clean breakaway was in progress, with a deep wedge driven in towards Motoyama Village, and the enemy reeling. At 1300, the treatment was repeated, with Williams and Duplantis again attacking behind the combined fires. As an added feature, Boehm's 3d Bn. Ninth Marines, was attached to the 21st, ready to punch through any soft spot.

Within an hour, Duplantis had knifed forward (the soft spot apparently had been waiting ready-made). The ridge was crossed, the enemy's main battle position divided, and Motoyama Village, long since levelled, was in our hands. But Williams was not so fortunate: again his attack was stymied by intense mortar and small-arms fire, with little to show except local gains amid a sort of petrified jungle of basalt chunks and lava crags, tunnelled deep with traversed caves and chambers 20 and 25 feet straight underground. For variation, there was refuse and rubble from the sulphur mines, and steaming, stinking slag-heaps.

Meanwhile Duplantis' rapid advance had created a gap between his left and the pinned-down elements of Williams' 1st Bn. To plug this, and to outflank the resistance confronting Williams, the 2d Bn. 21st Marines, under English, was ordered in during the afternoon. Despite another solid preparation of supporting weapons, English was halted behind his Line of Departure (just west of the sulphur mine) by heavy small arms and mortar fire and was unable to close up behind his barrage. Result: the late afternoon attack progressed slowly against numerous pillboxes and bunkers on a rearward spur of Motoyama Ridge.

The day's work, however, had been notable. No longer could the Nips sit atop Motoyama Ridge with observation and fields of fire commanding every inch of lower Iwo: no longer could they move about unobserved in the depression about Airfield No. 3. The Third had burst into their workshop. The Division was bivouacked in their parish.

(After the Motoyama breakthrough, it seemed—briefly—that the road to the sea was open. A series of headlong fast-stepping attacks punched across the low ground until the Division was at the foot of that last ridge-line—the other leg of our horse-shoe—beyond which was the sea. But on the night of 2 March, while the next day's battle-plan was being worked out, the G-2 carried into the blacked-out command-post a captured map. It says here: this is no scratch resistance that we have to our



One of light AA cannon that held us up.  
Cushman's Hill 199-0 rises in background.

front: the opposition that Randall ran into this afternoon is the outpost-line of a thickly and methodically organized center of resistance to our right front, commanding our zone from a hill [what was it—362?] which is larded with deep ravines full of pillboxes, caves and bunkers, and studded with all calibers and types of weapons: we are up against something).

AT this point, the Third Division zone crosses what in effect is a saddle: on the northerly end rises Hill 362, in what was target-area 235-U on the battle map; on the southern, or right, end, it is anchored to a second Hill 362, in target-area 219-U. Each one is of commanding importance, and upon each was formidable resistance. The Division's final breakthrough can be summed up in an account of the battle for the Hills 362.

The fighting of 2 March was in effect two separate actions, each directed toward securing one of these hills. The 21st Marines on the left (with Boehm's 3d Bn. Ninth, attached) was extended westward and south, where the Fifth Division was groping for contact. Boehm, on the left, had worked almost to the top of 362 (the northern one) by early afternoon, only to be met by "a sudden, prolonged and intense burst of fire," as the war-diarist puts it, not only from small arms and machine-guns, but from two or more 75-mm guns which swept the approaches. The ground was bad: no fields of fire or

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## Dark Horse on Iwo

(Continued from page 7)

observation except for the defenders; broken chunky basalt ledges; and many reinforced concrete defenses (the place had been the site of anti-aircraft and coast defenses which had resisted our ships and aircraft in the preliminaries). Facing this onslaught, Boehm was forced back so that his battalion at length held a salient (mainly in the Fifth Division's zone) just short of Hill 362, and curved around a ridge extending southwestward therefrom; it was not an enviable position.

On the right, the Ninth Marines (with the 21st attached through the continual juggling of reserves) had hit a wall. Cushman and Randall in the assault, with Cushman's 2d Bn on the left, were at a standstill along a road 500 yards east of Motoyama, where resistance had stiffened: another nest of pill-boxes and bunkers, with rising ground in rear—the south Hill 362. It was not, Cushman reported, that the line was unbreakable—one fresh company could work through with precise teamwork of weapons and assault technique. A late afternoon co-ordinated attack might do the trick, and, at 1530, behind artillery and naval gunfire preparation with rolling barrage, the Ninth made its try, only to be held in place by knee-mortar and flat-trajectory fire.

The situation on the night of 2 March, as clarified by the captured enemy map, showed that the Division confronted a final defensive locality as well organized as Motoyama Ridge, if not more so, and on much worse terrain. Frontal attack against either of the 362s would be costly, even if successful. It would be better to get astride the lower center of the ridge, from which one could perhaps turn

these hills with whatever maneuver might be possible in cramped Iwo.

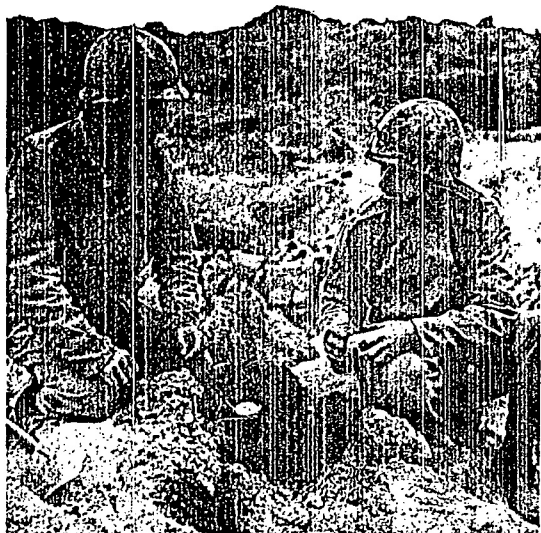
The subsequent days confirmed this notion. On 3 March, after an all-day fire-fight, elements of the Fifth Division finally came even with Boehm on the left, and relieved him where he clung to the fire-swept slopes of his Hill 362. In the center, the 1st and 2d Bns of the 21st, now under Houser and Percy respectively, had worked almost due eastward, staying to the north of Airfield No. 3, which was unhealthy, clinging to the rising ground on their left and trying to get forward onto the saddle to their front. Inch by inch, they made it, not in a day, but, by the night of 4 March, Percy held a nose which more or less overlooked the sea, and which at any rate secured the Division's left boundary against incursions from Hill 362 to the north. At right angles to his line, facing due south, ran Houser's 1st Bn, 21st Marines, with its right more or less in the air. Between Houser and Cushman, who had the Ninth Marines' left battalion, there was a gap. "covered," as some wag put it, "by fire—from the Nips." In the angle between Houser and Cushman lay the upper end of the iron resistance which had stalled the Ninth, Cushman's Pocket, they called it.

**B**Y 5 March, despite determined attacks, and every possible combination of weapons support, it was evident, even to Corps, that the advance was stalled—not only for the Third, but, due to stiff resistance, in far adjacent divisions as well. As it was not possible to get the fresh Third Marines, still held afloat in reserve, the decision was taken to employ Sunday, 5 March, as a day of regrouping and reorganization, while all the supporting weapons had a go at Hill 362 (south). The 12th Marines fired continually, as did the Division's fire-support ships, and a powerful air-strike went in. When it was all over, relates the war-diary, "Enemy sniping, small arms and mortar fires continued active." So a further super-preparation was planned, including a time-on-target (TOT) shoot by everything that could fire. But at the conclusion of the day (6 March) there was little to show for it.

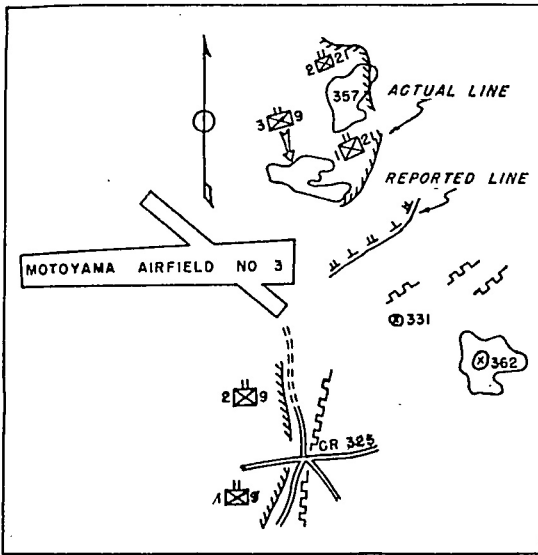
The situation was becoming critical. Elements of the Division, it is true, were atop the last ridge-line in enemy hands, but the high ground to left and right, especially the latter, was firmly held by the Nips. The terrain and the closeness of combat virtually ruled out effective use of supporting weapons. It was a rifleman's problem, a matter for BARs, flamethrowers, pole-charges, and teamwork.

On the afternoon, therefore, of 6 March, Gen Erskine employed tactics unique in this operation, and so far as was known, hitherto unemployed in the Pacific theater: a coordinated night attack to seize Hill 362 (south).

We still have a right-angled reentrant in our lines, between the left battalion of the Ninth, facing east, and the right battalion of the 21st, facing



Men on Mars: In steaming Iwo sands, marines cooked C-ration as though on another planet.

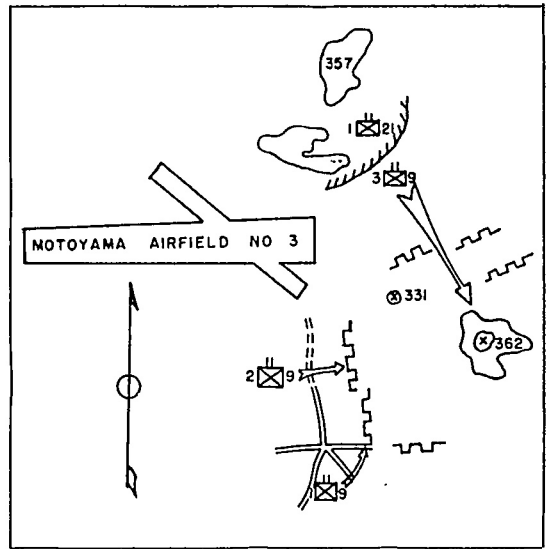


Situation prior to night attack, 6 March.

south. Midway in this reentrant is Hill 331, a subsidiary nose some 300 yards short of Hill 362. The plan is to have Boehm's 3d Bn of the Ninth (still attached to the 21st) as its chosen instrument: Boehm attacks southward, down the ridge, jumping off at 0500 from the forward positions of the 1st Bn, 21st Marines, while the battalions of the Ninth attempt to move forward at the same time. All illumination in the Corps zone will be checked at 0450. The artillery will fire random harassing concentrations of mixed smoke and HE during the night—at 0455, they will hit Hill 362 with five minutes of smoke. There is no opportunity for the reconnaissance that Boehm would like, but he can get most of the dope from Houser, whom he passes through.

In the Division CP, the staff checked watches; it was 0430. Every few minutes someone would look outside through the foul and rainy weather. If a burst of fire or a stray round was heard, faces tensed. At 0450, the illumination slackened and ceased. Five more minutes, and there followed the familiar crack and swish of an outgoing harassing-concentration from the artillery: you could set a watch by the 12th Marines. Then, at King-hour, a star-shell burst. Hadn't all illumination been checked? Get the naval gunfire officer! It was a Fourth Division ship, he reported, and lunged to the field phone and radio. Meanwhile, word came back that the attack had jumped off. Still no sound. Were they moving at all? Had the steaming earth swallowed them?

It was dawn before the answers came. First report: Boehm is on Hill 362. They are killing Nips in the open with flamethrowers as they stumble out of their caves. Scattering fire is coming from the rear. We have advanced 400 yards with not a scrap



The attack as delivered, 0500 on 7 March.

of resistance for the first 40 minutes, and then nothing to speak of.

Daylight brought a further report. The hill is not 362—it is 331 that we overran. But Boehm is halfway up 362 now. By the mischance of war, the Line of Departure had been farther back than anyone had thought. An advance of 400 yards from the assumed position would have made it 362, but from the actual lines it was 331. At first daylight ("Early dawn," Stonewall Jackson would have put it). Boehm got his bearings and took in the situation. His reaction was immediate: launch a coordinated attack while they are still back on their heels. Behind artillery preparation, then, at 0705 the attack was resumed, and by nightfall it could be reported that the resistance was largely broken, that disintegration had set in, that even the long-suffering Ninth Marines, still confronting the dug-in tanks of Cushman's Pocket, had picked up a hundred yards or so, which represented quite a gain.

On the left, at the other 362 and its adjacent high ground, Percy's 2d Bn of the 21st was overlooking the sea and covering the flank. Percy's positions overlooked a barren, flat stretch of beaches commanded to seaward by enemy caves set thick in the cliffs. When marines went down those cliff-faces, intense flanking fire had burst forth from Nip positions on the reverse slopes of 362 in the Fifth Division zone. It was decided that Percy should wait, and advance as the Fifth advanced, covering the beaches by fire, and mopping them up at leisure.

(Much more might be related of the final push to the sea through confused, desperate Nip resistance, until men of A Company, 21st Marines, scooped up a canteen full of sea-water from the beaches in their zone, and relayed it back to the Corps Commander with the now famous quotation: "For inspection, not consumption." The elimination of every pocket

would be a story in itself, like the struggle for Boehm's Nose, on the Fourth Division boundary, or the day when Duplantis personally manned a 7.2-inch rocket-truck to blast out resistance on Hill 202-A. But there is another matter to be considered, now that the Division's zone is secured.)

Up to date, we have treated the Third Division's drive up Iwo Jima as a matter of battalions, of situations and tactics. Like the communiques, we spoke in a matter-of-fact way of "preparation by artillery, air and naval gunfire." But, as any marine knows, there is more than that, and the coordination of all weapons was a noteworthy feature. There are other features: the 12th Marines; fire-support ships and navy men and marines of the shore fire-control parties; the coordinated air-strikes by carrier-planes.

The Third landed on Iwo, fortunate in having already laid the foundations of weapons support not only through training on all levels, but because all staff sections and officers had considered it their jobs to know the characteristics, limitations and problems of other outfits. Thus, when a war correspondent drifted into the supporting-arms tent one day, it was the air officer who lectured him on artillery methods, while the gunfire and artillery officers presented each others' specialty. The relationship was grounded in personal friendship. One of the Division SOPs put it, "effective coordination of supporting arms is the product of close, personal liaison on all levels."

Each night, when the next day's battle-plan was being prepared, the artillery, air and naval gunfire officers would prepare a joint plan of fires, exchanging targets and information, freely modifying each other's commitments and making adjustments based upon mutual understanding of problems and limitations. When the thing was complete, they would present it together to the G-3, Chief of Staff, and the General. Lord help the man unable to justify a concentration or give a clear explanation to Gen Erskine.

During routine operations, artillery, air and naval gunfire were coordinated through a supporting-arms tent, a separate blackout into which were trunked all communications for the three: direct line to the 12th Marines fire-direction center; lines to air and naval gunfire radio-centrals; regular lines off the Division switchboard; and a direct line to the V Corps supporting arms switchboard which handled calls to the corresponding V Corps sections and provided lateral communication with the other divisions.

In addition, however, to being an efficient central for the planning, coordination and direction of the massed fires which became synonymous with a Third Division assault, the supporting-arms tent was the best short-order restaurant in the CP. Meat and beans, 10-in-1 ration bacon, a fried egg or so. A haggard observer would stagger in from the lines with an inch of ash around his deep-sunk eyes.

Have a Suribachi Screamer, it'll make you feel better: sick-bay alky and fruit juice.

At all times of critical operations the staff would be together, as likely as not with the General, the Chief of Staff and G-3. Otherwise, they would still be in immediate reach by wire communication. An important decision or recommendation on supporting weapons was never reached without joint concurrence.

And this paid off. Instead, for example, of the air officer trying to achieve victory through air-power, he would examine a target to see if one of the others couldn't use it and weigh the relative value of the strike against the loss through cessation of other fires. Net result: the Division requested few air strikes, but got a high percentage approved. Coordination between artillery and naval gunfire was absolute and complete—when ammunition afloat was low, the artillery would extend itself; vice versa, it was no uncommon thing to see 5-inch fires being pulled in to 100 yards of friendly troops when the 105s were pressed for shells.

**R**ECALL that we left Percy's 2d Bn of the 21st still waiting to advance. The Fifth faces a stubborn pocket in an impossible piece of terrain to the front so that it cannot readily advance, especially as the pocket is covered by enemy fire from high ground in rear, the northern massif of the island, sloping away from Hill 362 (north), on the flanks of which Percy still waits. With the Fifth stalled, why not turn the job over to the Third?

On the night of 15 March, word came down to the 21st Marines: tomorrow you will attack northward to clean out the upper end of the Fifth Division's zone; boundaries will be redrawn so that we get everything east of the ridge which runs from 362 up to Kitano Point; you will relieve elements of the 27th Marines along the Division left boundary, and attack behind our usual preparation; the Fifth says that the area is tough—another den of basalt crags with pillboxes and caves.

Next morning, with Percy and Houser in the assault, Percy's 2d Bn on the left, the 21st relieved the 27th and attacked behind a scorching preparation. The rolling barrage of naval gunfire and artillery churned up the troublesome zone right to the sea.

Enough was enough. The rain of fire forced the Japs into ground, only to be flushed out by riflemen. By 1000, word came in from Withers, who commanded the 21st, there are more Nips running around here than we've seen in all the campaign. Both battalions are moving right out. The going is naturally a little harder on the left for Percy as he moves down the ridge. We'll be at the sea before dark.

He was better than his word. By 1330, both assault battalions were on the beaches in their zones, and mopping up was underway and, at 1800, Iwo was secured.