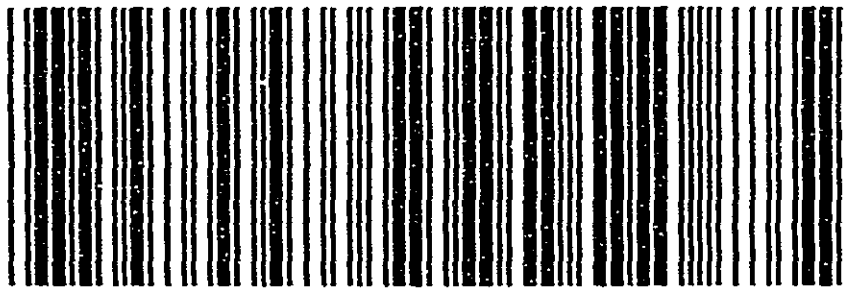
AWM52
Australian Military Forces, Army headquarters, formation and unit diaries, 1939-1945

1/1/7 HEADQUARTER UNITS

General Headquarters South West Pacific Area

Detachment Section 22 (GHQ SWPA AMF Det Sec 22)

August 1945



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SUMMARY OF ACTIVITIES AMF DET SECTION 22 GHQ

Section 22 GHQ was charged with the responsibility of collecting data and providing the necessary equipment to carry out radar and radio counter-measures in the South-West Pacific Area.

SM 25945 of 12 Nov 43 established a detachment of AMF personnel of Section 22 GHQ. The staff to be 2 captains, 2 Lieuts, 1 WOII, 4 Sgts, 8 Cpls and 19 Ptes. Capt D.J.P. Tier NX135996 was appointed Liaison Officer between Section 22 and LHQ. WOII R.D. Wilson NX88788 was appointed Statistics Officer. It was not until the 8 Jan 44 that the establishment was completed. This was done by interviewing a large number of personnel undergoing training with Training Battalions. They were selected for their general intelligence and infantry training. Technical ability was not required.

It was decided to carry out a combined experimental and operational mission to determine most suitable make up of the detachment. Plans were drawn up for the detachment to proceed to Long Island in the New Britain Area. The purpose of the mission being to locate all enemy land based radars in the New Britain, Admiraltys, and Madang Areas, also to determine the amount of enemy shipping activity and types where possible.

This detachment consisting of two officers and 13 ORs of whom only four were trained in radar counter-measures were attached for this mission only and were not part of the original detachment.

Transportation by plane to Finschhafen was arranged and thence to the final destination by LCM. On arrival at Long Island a brief camp was established and a reconnaissance sent off to select a suitable site which had to be as high as practicable to increase the range of the equipment taken. At that time it was expected that native carriers could be used to bring equipment into position and this first reconnaissance was undertaken with this object in view. Since the natives were unwilling to part from their village the choice was limited and no suitable site was found.

A second reconnaissance was made. This time the object being

to locate a suitable site which would be easily accessible and where the equipment could be carried by the party themselves. This reconnaissance was not successful.

A third reconnaissance was made and a site selected at approximately 3,000ft elevation. Water supplies were not adequate for the entire party.

A working party commenced erection of a platform on which the equipment would be maintained and the technical equipment was set up, the object being to test the training.

Six days later the platform was completed and some of the equipment carried to the site. After two days the gear was operative and results satisfactory. The remainder of the gear was to be brought up, but bad weather so softened the track that a delay of three days was experienced. When the equipment arrived at the site heavy rains prevented the setting up for a further two days and many faults and break-downs of the radar equipment were experienced due to the excessive moisture.

When finally set up and operating satisfactorily the technical personnel only remained with the equipment for five weeks until instructions were received to evacuate the entire detachment. The remainder of the personnel maintained a base camp at the beach and contacted patrols about the equipment in all operations to ensure its security. No enemy action or contact was experienced. The object of the mission was fulfilled in as much as three land based radars were located, two in the New Britain Area and one in the Admiraltys, and a number of enemy ships transmissions were intercepted.

Upon return to the mainland the fundamental conception of the unit was altered, the personnel given additional training and the equipment completely charged. The detachment then consisted of specially trained personnel of the commando type capable of operating radar counter-measures equipment, of carrying all their equipment themselves, living solely by their own resources whilst on duty and relying only on airborne supplies at periodical intervals.

In addition to the new equipment obtained from United States sources a special light weight operating tent and new collapsible aerial system were designed and considered. Special packs were made and all equipment was carefully checked and weighed to reduce it to its lightest possible component.

After these improvements had been made and adopted the unit, fifteen strong, was capable of living, operating and travelling for nine days without any replenishment whatever. Radio communications with base would be maintained throughout this period.

The next mission was to Mindoro in the Philippines where a detachment was charged with the responsibility of giving early warning of approaching enemy ships and planes to the task force which occupied San Jose. This function was supplementary to the normal function of the unit, which is obtaining information concerning enemy radar by interception of their transmission.

Enroute from Leyte enemy air attacks were experienced and arrangements were made for personnel to augment the original gun crews to gain experience. On the completion of the mission all gun crews were complimented on their defence of the vessel which narrowly escaped destruction on two occasions from enemy suicide planes.

On arrival at Mindoro the unit left immediately for a site on Ilin Island which had been selected by a defence party. Lt Rose who was in charge of the defence party captured an enemy pilot who had parachuted from his plane into the sea.

Two days later the equipment was set up and operating. On 26 Dec 44 an emergency signal was transmitted to task force HQ at San Jose that at least one enemy vessel was approaching, two hours later this was confirmed by the appearance of enemy war ships off San Jose which was shelled for 90 minutes a minimum amount of damage was done as preliminary precautions had been taken following receipt of the warning and our planes and P.T. boats had commenced the attack before the enemy were in position and as a result two of the enemy ships were sunk.

The detachment was evacuated from Ilin Island on 14 Jan 45

and until that date no further enemy interception was recorded. It is understood that the data concerning enemy war ships radar was entirely new and proved most valuable.

On 16 Jan 45 the detachment left Mindoro for Marinduque the mission being to locate enemy land based radar on Southern Luzon, to determine the amount and type of enemy shipping in that area and to intercept and locate if possible enemy radio engaged in lower echelon traffic preparatory to the landing on Luzon.

The equipment was set up on a feature approximately 1,400 feet high which gave coverage to the Verde Islands Passage as far as Lubang Island (110 miles away). Both the radar and radio interception stations were set up and operated satisfactorily.

From this position 180 enemy radio stations were monitored and five radar were successfully intercepted.. To obtain the D.F. of the radar signals a patrol set off around the Island travelling through hitherto un-liberated territory to the south side of the Island, the patrol was joyously welcomed by the inhabitants and a rest of two days was taken at Tarrigos. The party was feted and given a reception in the town hall by the local dignitaries.

After completely circuiting the whole Island only one of the enemy radars could be definitely located that was on Pagbidago Grande Island in Tayabas Bay, confirmation of this was obtained and destroyed equipment found near the spot located.

On 6 Feb 45 the unit moved to the beach to be ready for evacuation and picked up a Japanese civilian prisoner who was taken on 8 Feb to Task Force HQ at San Jose.

On 21 Feb 45 Capt Tier with five personnel together with an officer and five enlisted men of the US Army Signal Corps emplaned in two Catalina aircraft for Tawi Tawi in the Sulu Archipelago.

On 22 Feb at 0230 hrs after an uneventful flight most of which was carried out at very low altitude to avoid enemy radar the catalinas landed at a pre-determined spot and were met by moro guerillas. The planes returned immediately and the party

was taken direct to guerilla HQ where the remainder of the day was spent studying maps of the area to determine the most suitable location for the site. On 23 Feb an advance party set out to reconnoitre and reached Balimbing. The remainder followed with the equipment and reached Buan that night. The following day a site was selected on Balimbing Hill and the equipment was moved up.

The object of this mission was the same as that undertaken on Marinduque but due to the close proximity of the enemy forces in this instance a great deal of additional information was forwarded.

The site chosen overlooked enemy positions at Bato Bato, Sanga Sanga, and Bongao. In an endeavour to force the enemy to evacuate Bato Bato a large number of electric lights were switched on in and around the camp to give the appearance of a large force. By 4 Mar a patrol headed by Lt Tremaine of the US Signal Corps found the enemy had quit Bato Bato.

On 10 Mar Lt Tremaine took a second patrol by native boat to Jolo. They returned on 18 Mar and brought with then two escapees from the Japanese, one a Korean, Chen Yun who had previously been a 1st Lieut in the Japanese Merchant Navy and had been in charge of the radio station at Jolo. Illermo had been an interpreter for the Japanese Military Police. Both proved extremely valuable in providing the detachment with information concerning enemy activity in this area. The main party which had remained at Tawi Tawi had moved camp from Balimbing to Sibentud which gave better coverage of the enemy positions. On 18 Mar Capt Tier was called on by guerillas to delouse a booby trap which consisted of enemy depth charges containing approx 400 lbs TNT. On 20 Mar Capt Tier led a patrol to Banaran Is to meet P.T. boats. A second patrol under Lt Tremaine left for Cula Cula to intercept two catalina supply planes.

The first patrol returned to camp at 0330 hrs and a third patrol again led by Capt Tier left at 0700 hrs for Cula Cula to intercept supply planes. After the planes had departed Lt Tremaine's party returned to camp and enroute were intercepted by an enemy barge and fired upon. There were no casualties and the party escaped.

A third patrol took charge of Chen Yun and Illermo from the guerillas together with captured radio equipment which had been captured at Patu and Siasi and proceeded to Banaran to meet P.T. boats. They rendezvoused at 0100 hrs on 23 Mar and travelled by P.T. boat to Julo thence to Zamboaza. The prisoners were interrogated and the equipment and Korean despatched to Leyte. Ammunition and supplies and communication facilities were arranged with Eighth Army HQ. The detachment was requested to forward certain information by radio to Eighth Army HQ concerning disposition of enemy forces and suitability of landing beaches prior to the landing which units of this Army was scheduled to make on 2 Apr.

On 24 Mar Capt Tier travelled to Basilan Is which was a P.T. Base and lectured to the P.T. boat captains on the defences of Bongao preparatory to a raid to be made there the following day. At 1900 hrs that night they left for Tawi Tawi. On 25 Mar arrived Bongao 0900 hrs and proceeded through the mine field to waters north side of range of Island near Bongao to attack its inner defences. At 1200 hrs contact was made with a fighter cover of four Corsairs each carrying one 1000 lb bomb. At 1215 hrs closed range to engage enemy at 2500 yds approximate range approached to bring fire to bear and encountered heavy opposition from enemy guns of calibre 37mm, 25 mm, 5 in and mortars (est only). Immediately the P.T. boats turned and withdrew at speed leaving smoke screen to cover escape. All ships were holed and one ship was set on fire but this was extinguished. Only one casualty who later died. The Corsairs attacked and met heavy opposition and also withdrew. The engagement was broken off and P.T. boats returned to base at best possible speed. Capt Tier returned by native canoe to base camp.

On 27 Mar heavy allied raids on the enemy positions at Bongao began and Capt Tier headed a patrol to Sanga Sanga Island to investigate a report that six large native boats had arrived from Borneo to evacuate enemy personnel. On 29 Mar one mortar under Pte Swaney was set up at Paniungan Point and on 2 Apr under Capt Tier at Pababig Island, the object being to bring fire to bear on enemy barge concentrations on Bongao Point. Good hits were registered and two

barges and one sea plane which was under repair at the waters edge were destroyed. Firing ceased when the mortar positions were made untenable by enemy fire from 37 mm cannons. Three guerillas were wounded.

The following day an attack was launched on Sanga Sanga airstrip and it was captured. Immediately a signal informing Eighth Army was despatched but unfortunately was not received in time to prevent an air strike by American aircraft on this area, and as a result a very trying day was spent by the patrol and guerillas in the area dodging American bombs and bullets, six guerillas were wounded.

That evening the patrol returned to camp and the following day another patrol led by Capt Tier set out again for Sanga Sanga. The native boat in which they were travelling was fired on by the enemy but they escaped without casualties. The time was spent in gathering general information preparatory to the landing which took place on 2 Apr.

On 3 Apr additional personnel from the detachment arrived at Sanga Sanga, and on 4 Apr two patrols one under Capt Tier and the other under Sgt Beatty were sent to either end of the Bongao Island to locate enemy radio equipment. Former patrol entered the enemy message centre and took one prisoner who was an operator. Captured seven radio sets, two radars which had been diamantled, together with complete code books and log books. The latter patrol on the other end of the Island located two 37 mm cannons and encountered an enemy patrol and were forced to withdraw.

On 5 Apr the remainder of the party arrived at Sanga Sanga as instructions had been received for its evacuation as soon as possible. All personnel in patrols were on Bangao this day and two barges were captured. American patrol of seven men reconnoitring in the vicinity of the message centre were attacked and six were killed.

On 6 Apr Lt Tremaine with four of the personnel left for Zamboanza by P.T. boat taking with them the Japanese prisoner, the remainder departed by LCT for Julo on 10 Apr and arrived Zamboanza on 11 Apr. Air transportation was obtained for the now reunited

detachment and the party reached its base at Mindoro Island on 13 Apr.

No further missions were carried out by the detachment until the Allied landing at Balikpapan at which time Lieut Rose and three personnel went in with the landing troops in the initial stages to collect enemy radio and radar equipment which might have been left behind. This mission was entirely successful and resulted in the collection of part of at least three radar sets.

Further missions had been planned for Dutch East Indies and Malaya and the strength of the unit had been increased to a total of 47 personnel. The sudden end of the war caused a change in plans before these arrangements had been completed.