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21 Infantry Brigade
September 1943 - January 1944

R E P O R T O N O P E R A T I O N S
in MARKHAM - RAMU VALLEYS

15 Sep 43 - 9 Nov 43.

by Brig I.N.DOUGHERTY, D.S.O.,

Commanding 21 Aust Inf Bde.

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REPORT ON OPERATIONS
in MARKHAM - RAMU VALLEYS
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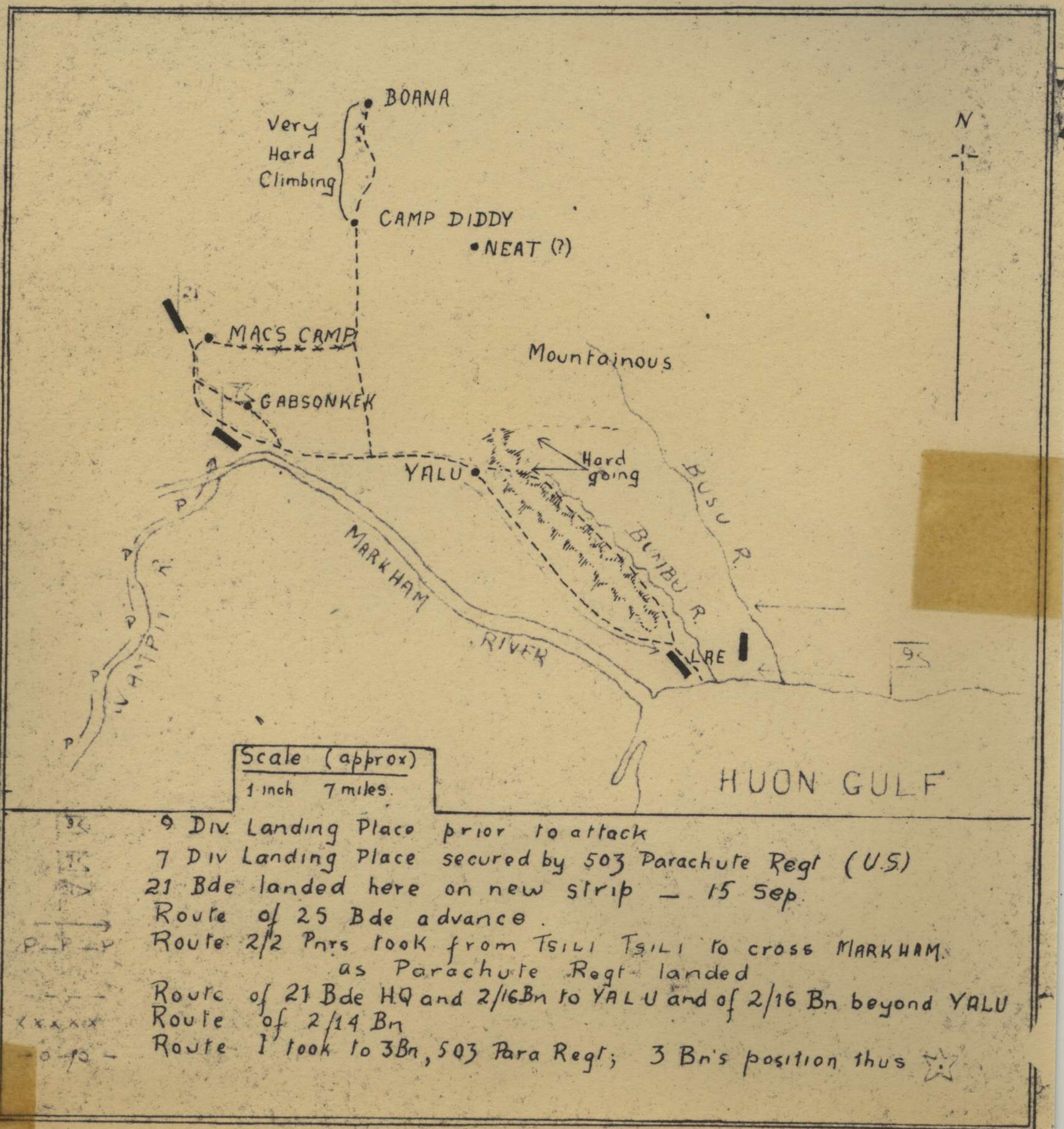
On my arrival in NEW GUINEA from the mainland on 31 July, I went direct to General Vasey's Headquarters. He then informed me of the plan for the capture of LAE. With minor changes that gradually developed, a plan was evolved that was actually carried out. The plan was kept a close secret within the Brigade and only COs and key staff officers were told about it prior to the Parachute landing at NADZAB. I was particularly pleased with the way security of information concerning the plan was kept within the Brigade. 21 Brigade was to fly to NADZAB after 25 Brigade and other divisional units. When it became obvious that LAE was being evacuated by the Japs, it was decided to put forward the movement of 21 Brigade in the hope that it might be used to cut off the Japs in their retreat to the northern mountains. At 2130 hrs on the 14th Sep, a message was received from Brig CHILTON (who was responsible for the movement of the Division from MORESBY) that certain serials of the Brigade, which mainly consisted of Bde HQ, 2/14 and 2/16 Bns were to commence to move early on the morning of 15 Sep. Later he informed me of the reasons which had influenced the speeding up of our move.

The first flight took off from WARD'S Drome at 0625 hrs on the 15th Sep and, after a flight under good conditions, landed at NADZAB at 0815 hrs. On arrival at NADZAB I rang the GOC but could not see him as he was about to leave to visit 25 Bde. He told me his intentions and these were confirmed by the G1 who visited me a little later. 2/14 Bn was to move at the earliest to BOANA to intercept the Japs on their line of retreat. Nobody knew much about the tracks in the NADZAB area, and, after some time spent in investigation, I found that the best route appeared to go via MACS CAMP to CAMP DIDDY and thence to BOANA. 2/14 Bn moved to MACS CAMP and later in the afternoon moved East and then North but did not reach CAMP DIDDY that night. They continued the following day. Brigade HQ established itself at MACS CAMP for the night 15/16 Sep and also 2/16 Bn less three rifle companies camped in that area.

Early on the morning of 16 Sep, I received orders to move with my HQ and 2/16 Bn to the vicinity of YALU and the UPPER BUMBU River. On arrival there I was to take under command the 3 Bn of 503 Parachute Regiment. This Bn was in position astride the track along the BUMBU River about 1½ hours from the head of the BUMBU. It was believed to be in contact with a large number of Japs and it was thought perhaps these Japs comprised the main body that was escaping from LAE.

Communications had failed and no information had been received from 3 Bn since 1400 hrs the previous day. The General was concerned as to their position should the Japs be in fairly superior numbers. On arrival at YALU, Maj OWENS went forward to the 3 Bn to get information concerning the situation. Later I moved to the top of the ridge on the track leading to the UPPER BUMBU and stayed there during the night. I met the BM on the track and from him found that 3 Bn had beaten off the enemy the day before and everything was quiet in their vicinity. On the morning of the 17th I moved forward to 3 Bn. I considered that the enemy that had contacted and temporarily pressed 3 Bn were either

(i) enemy trying to get out of LAE by the BUMBU RIVER
or (ii) a flank guard to protect the line of withdrawal which ran North from the BUMBU RIVER short of 3 Bn positions and then went somewhere through the mountains past the vicinity of BOANA.



The natives mentioned NEAT which is some distance South - east of BOANA. I had sent the 2/16 Bn which spent the previous night at YALU in a North - easterly direction, hoping that they would intercept the Jap route to the North through BOANA. Although they had proceeded well towards the BUSU RIVER before nightfall, they had not found anything of the Jap.

When I visited 3 Bn I knew that higher authority were anxious to withdraw them to MORESBY in order that they could be reorganised and they had been longer than was originally anticipated on the BUMBU RIVER. Although I felt there was no threat to their position, they had no information of enemy movements on their front. Before making a decision, I ordered 3 Bn to send a patrol down the BUMBU to endeavour to make contact with the enemy. The patrol contacted an enemy position a mile to the South-east of their position. I considered it quite safe to withdraw the Bn so the patrol was recalled, and I ordered 3 Bn to move back to YALU and thence to NADZAB. I left a small detachment from Bde HQ on the track near the headwaters of the BUMBU in case the Jap did move along that route. That night I discussed the future role of the Brigade with Division and, as a result, I ordered the 2/16 Bn to move to YALU next day preparatory to moving back to NADZAB on the 18th and I returned to MACS CAMP.

No information had been heard from the 2/14 Bn since they were two hours past CAMP DIDDY at 0730 hrs on the 17th. I sent an LO forward to contact the 2/14 Bn to get information and with orders for a special patrol which it was intended to send East from BOANA. I visited the GOC and discussed with him the Brigade's future role in the UPPER MARKHAM VALLEY.

On 17 Sep operations in the UPPER MARKHAM VALLEY commenced. On that day 2/6 Indep Coy had landed by plane on the flat country West of the LERON RIVER. They moved to SANGAN, where they found B Coy of the PAPUAN INFANTRY BATTALION who had marched from CHIVASING. There was no enemy at SANGAN.

On 19 Sep the Indep Coy with the PIB were moving to KAIAPIT. It was known at Division that there were enemy in KAIAPIT that day, but their strength was not known and it was thought they were probably a patrol. They had fired on Col ROBERTSON in a CUB plane, and he saw our troops advancing. Communications with the Company were not good, and it was not known whether they had secured KAIAPIT or not.

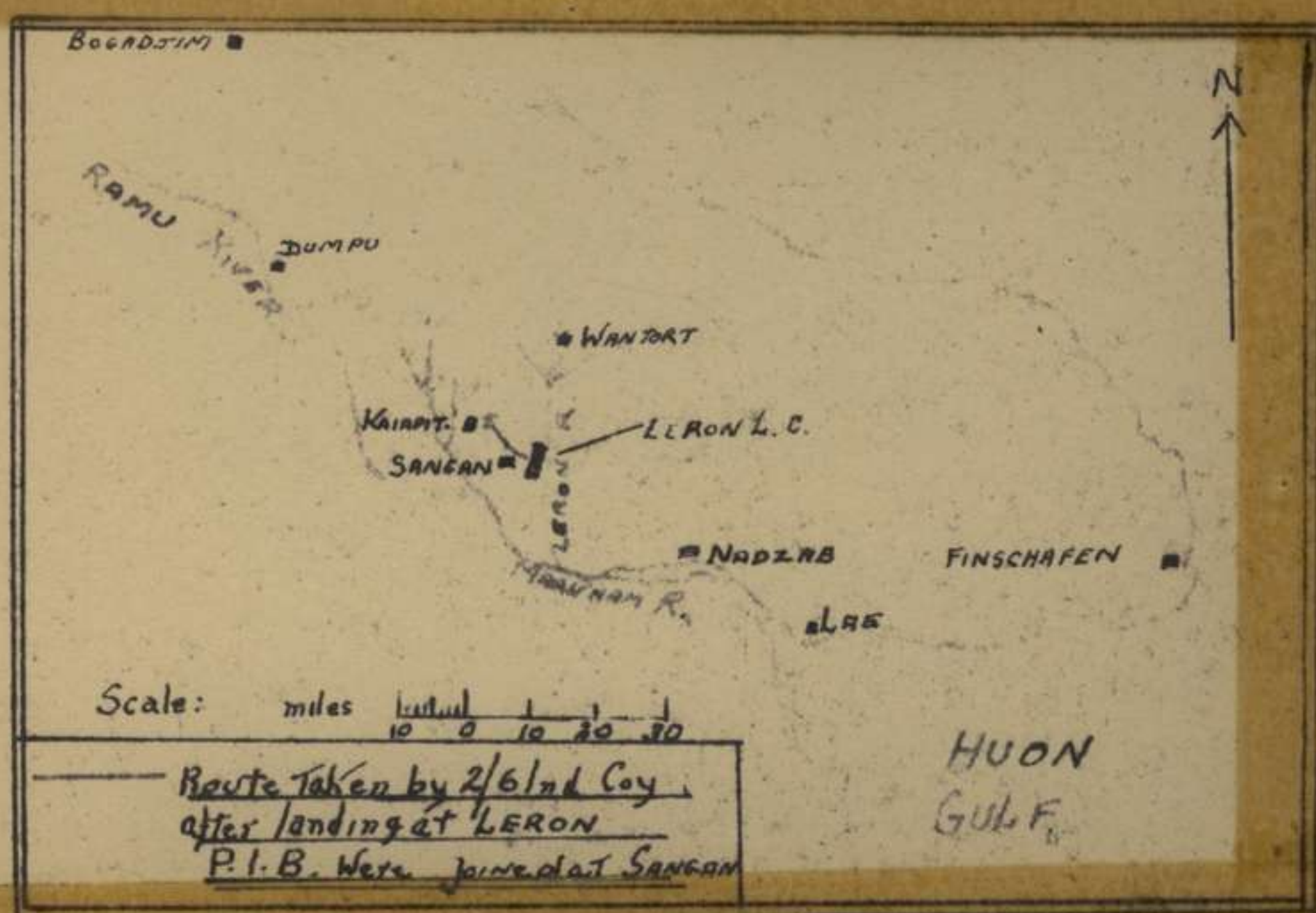
So on 19 Sep there were two alternate probable plans for 20 - 21 Sep.

If the Indep Coy had not been able to secure KAIAPIT Landing Ground, 2/16 Bn (my only available battalion) was to be flown in to LERON Landing Ground with light equipment on 20 Sep, and was to assemble at SANGAN that evening. The following day it was to contact 2/6 Indep Coy and secure KAIAPIT Landing Ground and improve it so that transports could land.

If the Company had captured KAIAPIT Landing Ground then Bde HQ and 2/16 Bn would fly in there as soon as it was ready.

In view of the possibility of operations in the MARKHAM VALLEY beyond KAIAPIT developing, I was anxious to have 2/14 Bn recalled from BOANA. Approval for this was obtained, and the Bn commenced the return journey on the morning of 20 Sep. Slight contact with the Japs had been made, but owing to delays caused by flooded rivers the battalion had not reached BOANA.

On 20 Sep it was learned that after a sharp, little battle on 19 Sep and on the morning of the 20th the Company had destroyed the Japs in the KAIAPIT area and had secured the Mission Hill. They set to work to prepare the Landing Strip and it was ready for transports on the afternoon of 21 Sep. So our second probable plan was the one put into operation.



At 1000 hrs on 21st I visited Division Headquarters. First I called on Col CANET, AAQMG, and found out from him that I would have under command in the KAIAPIT area the following:-

- 2/16 Aust Inf Bn and my other Bns when they arrived
- 2/6 Aust Indep Coy
- B Coy PIB
- One Coy of either 2/6 or 2/4 Aust Fd Amb
- Det of Supply Depot Coy (10 offr and 15 ORs)
- Det of General Transport Coy (4 jeeps and 4 trailers)
- Two AASC Offrs in addition to Capt MORRIS
- Engr Recce Party
- Major DEUCHATEL
- Interpreter, M/Sgt USHIRO (US Army)
- Station Comd Det for Air Strip
- ANGAU Representatives.

We estimated 600 natives, at least, would be needed.

I then visited General VASEY and he told me that my role would be to secure KAIAPIT and occupy the MARKHAM VALLEY as far as ARIFAGAN CREEK.

Col HUTCHISON (5 Air Force) was with him at the time. It was not then known whether or not KAIAPIT Landing Ground was ready for transport planes. Col HUTCHISON said a length of 4000 ft would be needed as planes had to land up wind and the hill made approach difficult. (Note that this was not the old strip used in prewar days).

The area West of MARAWASA was excellent for landing grounds. It was considered desirable to secure this area as soon as possible so that the force could be supplied by air and other parts of the Division could be flown in there instead of to KAIAPIT. At this stage it was not intended to bring more of the Division than 21 Bde Group into KAIAPIT unless something prevented the securing of landing grounds West of MARAWASA.

The General was anxious to get something to KAIAPIT to strengthen the force there. Well on in the afternoon Col HUTCHISON made a test landing and evacuated the wounded of 2/6 Indep Coy. He flew back again with rations and ammunition, and I flew up with him on this trip. At the same time the General flew to KAIAPIT in his CUB and I met him on the strip.

We went together to Capt KING'S HQ at the MISSION. KING was still in command of his Coy though he had been wounded on the morning of the 20th. We found out the story of the battle which had been a very good victory for a small force like an Indep Coy.

More planes came in that afternoon bringing a nucleus of Bde HQ and Comd Gp and one Coy of 2/16 Bn. I left the Indep Coy holding the Mission Hill, the PIB, the village area immediately below it and posted the coy of 2/16 Bn on the feature at the NW end of the strip.

I had Capt King hand over to Capt ROSEBRAY and Capt KING prepared to be evacuated on the following morning.

On the morning of 22nd flying was good. The remainder of 2/16 Bn arrived in good time. During the morning WO RYAN of ANGAU interrogated a MARAWASA native for me concerning the route to MARAWASA. I got from him an accurate story of the route. He stated that there used to be a landing strip just West of SAGERAK village as well as the one marked on the map at ATSUNAS. This landing strip took two and three Junkers planes in prewar days.

This was useful information. I saw that SAGERAK and the country beyond it was a good early objective. Then, if we struck opposition in the narrow part of the valley near WANKON we would have a landing ground on the other side of the MANIANG and UMI Rivers which were serious obstacles.

At 1500 hrs 2/16 Bn moved Westward. That night it had reached the Western stream of the MANIANG River and occupied a position there.

My intentions were that 2/16 Bn should continue the following day with the object of securing the line of the ARIFAGAN CREEK.

I had expected 2/14 Bn to arrive that afternoon (22nd) and 2/27 Bn to arrive at NADZAB from MORESBY the following afternoon. I intended to leave either 2/14 Bn or 2/27 Bn (depending on time of arrival) to hold KAIAPIT, while the other would follow 2/16 Bn, moving via the track through HARAWAPAUM. I wanted to give the Indep Coy a little longer to reorganise and then to keep it in reserve temporarily. The following morning, 23rd Sep, 2/16 Bn moved forward a short distance to the YAFATS RIVER, as this was a better position to hold than the one it was occupying. The Bn patrolled to the UMI.

At 1520 hrs on the afternoon of the 22nd the G1, Col ROBERTSON, visited me at KAIAPIT. He told me that information acquired at KAIAPIT indicated that :-

- (a) The enemy destroyed in KAIAPIT were a coy of 78 Regt which belonged to 20 Div.
- (b) Between BOGADJIM and KAIAPIT were 78 Regt and one coy of 80 Regt.
- (c) The rest of 80 Regt were on the RAI COAST.
- (d) The third regt of 20 Div was 79 Regt.

Thus, in our advance from KAIAPIT we might meet the whole of 20 Div, as 79 and 80 Regts could be brought to re-inforce 78 Regt. However, I felt that the strength of 20 Div in the UPPER MARKHAM area would be limited by supply problems which the Jap would face, even with his motor road up the MIIDJIM RIVER.

Col ROBERTSON also indicated that it was desired to secure DUMPU by 4 Oct, as, after its capture supplies and service dets would need to be flown in and there would be no fighter cover available for transports between 10 and 20 Oct.

During this period, WO's ASHTON and SEALE of ANGAU were recruiting as many natives as possible for our carrier lines. The natives appeared generally to be eager to help us, though there were undoubtedly some disloyal ones. Many of those recruited had been working for the Japs; some had been trained in a special school at SAGERAK for a role somewhat similar to that of our PIB.

In one of the huts of KAIAPIT Village were three dead natives who had had their hands and feet tied and had been bayoneted by the Japs. This incident had no doubt increased pro-British tendencies in the local inhabitants. At KAIAPIT in pre-war days, as in other parts of NEW GUINEA was a German Lutheran Mission. This mission had done much to sow the seeds of anti-British feeling and to husband the young plants that resulted and flourished. Here was one example of British tolerance or perhaps Australian isolation born of lack of experience of the natives and of the aims of other races, rebounding on our own heads.

At 0050 hrs on 23 Sep the following message was received from Division:-

"Refer conversation Bde Comd and ROBERTSON re enemy disposns. Confirmation now to hand. Anticipate liaison your orders. No further movement in strength until Comd visits you earliest 23 Sep."

During the morning of 23rd, 2/27 Bn arrived direct from MORESBY in 45 planes. The Bn relieved 2/6 Indep Coy on the high ground.

During the morning General VASEY visited me. He told me of the intentions of the Japs to attack our forces in the NADZAB area, using 78 Regt to secure KAIAPIT, and then to attack with 20 Div moving down the MARKHAM VALLEY, and remnants of 51 Div from LAE joining with it either at KAIAPIT (having moved West through the foothills North of the valley) or by attacking from BOANA to co-ordinate with 20 Div's attack.

These intentions were expressed in Jap documents captured at KAIAPIT by 2/6 Indep Coy. One coy of 78 Regt had already arrived in KAIAPIT and it looked as if the Japs' plan had been launched. Whether he would persist with it or not remained to be seen. His supply problems would be very difficult if he chose to attack KAIAPIT, and it looked as if he could not maintain a very big force in the attack. However we might meet more Jap strength when we advanced up the Valley towards MARAWASA.

During the day 2/16 Bn patrols crossed the UMI RIVER and enemy patrols on the far side withdrew after firing at long range. To assist the further advance of the Brigade it appeared desirable to secure the high ground South of, and overlooking, SAGERAK. 2/16 Bn patrols had occupied some of this ground but there were still enemy in SAGERAK.

I expected 2/14 Bn to arrive on 24 Sep, and with my complete Brigade I considered that I could hold KAIAPIT, crack the Jap if he attacked, and at the same time secure the UMI Crossing, and, with vigorous patrolling, hit the Jap hard in the SAGERAK area. So I told 2/16 Bn to secure the high ground South of SAGERAK on 24 Sep, leaving something to hold the crossing place, with the view of later driving the enemy from SAGERAK and preparing an air strip in its vicinity. I felt that if we had to fight for the MARAWASA area, which looked likely, and, if heavy rain fell, a landing strip West of the UMI would be essential.

On 24 Sep I visited 2/16 Bn at its crossing place on the UMI. The water in this river (which is really the UPPER MARKHAM) was fifty yards wide, four feet six inches deep in its deepest part and fast flowing. In flood time it obviously would spread to a width of up to two hundred yards and would become impossible to cross with Army Field Equipment. Even heavy rain in the Northern mountains would make it a serious obstacle.

With these facts impressed on my mind, after spending two hours watching 2/16 Bn crossing, I returned to Bde HQ at KAIAPIT to investigate what progress had been made in the troop position and the supply position. It was not as good as I had hoped it would be.

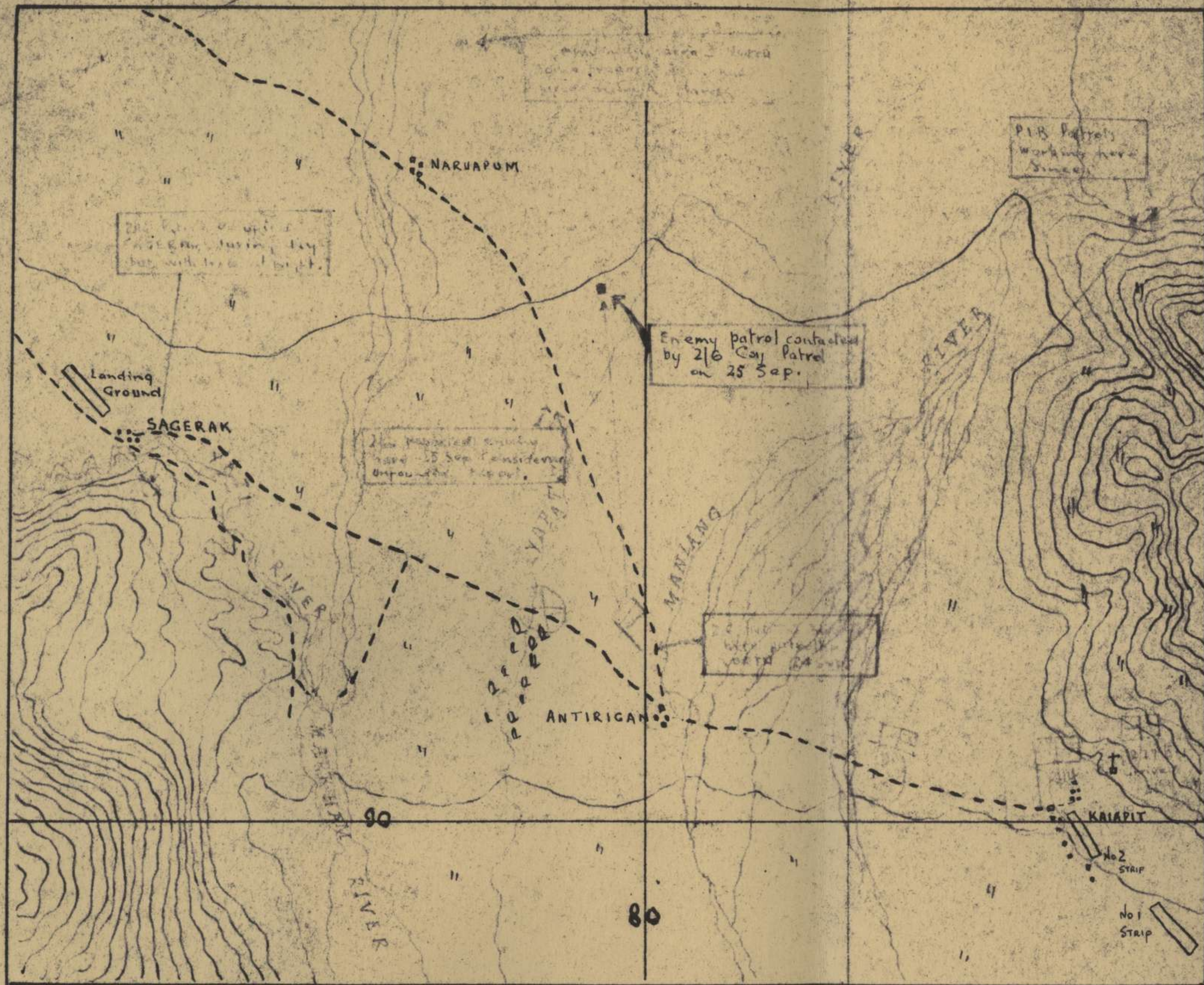
No planes at all had arrived during the day. So there was no 2/14 Bn, and no more rations or ammunition had arrived. The only reserves of rations and ammunition I had were those actually carried by 2/16 and 2/27 Bns. If no planes arrived the following day the supply position would deteriorate.

There were known enemy positions about the foothills at the headwaters of the UMI. During 24 Sep a patrol of 2/6 Indep Coy had met enemy with packs up, camouflaged, moving, and with at least three LMGs; but after a brief exchange of fire the enemy broke contact.

Later in the afternoon 2/6 Indep Coy moved North from ANTIRIGAN and reported enemy dug in in strength at a village one mile North of ANTIRIGAN.

These two contacts indicated a possible enemy move to the 2/16 Bn's L of C.

I received a signal from General VASEY saying that as the enemy in the area was double my strength he was most concerned about a part of the force being separated from the rest by the UMI. The tone of his message indicated that he had information that the enemy would carry out his plan; and the reported move North of ANTIRIGAN indicated that the enemy might be advancing.



SCALE. 1 INCH TO 1 MILE.
Ref Maps: ONGA 1 AMARI 1 INCH.

MOVES		21 BDE Group 22 - 25 Sep (both Ind)	
Posns	at end of 25 Sep	Patrols in this direction.	
2/16 BN	Posn	night	22/23 Sep
2/16 BN	Posn	night	23/24 Sep.
2/16 BN	Posn.	night	24/25 Sep.
" "	KUNAI	000. TIMBER.	

In view of all these factors I ordered 2/16 Bn to move back across the UMI at first light on 25 Sep, leaving a standing patrol South of SAGERAK. The Bn was to move right back to the East of the MANIANG RIVER, so that I could fight with 2/27 Bn and 2/16 Bn mutually supporting each other, if the enemy attacked.

I decided that 2/16 Bn would remain in this position, with patrols only forward to, and beyond, the UMI, until the whole Bde had concentrated and until sufficient reserves of supplies and ammunition had been built up at KAIAPIT.

On the morning of the 25th, 2/16 Bn arrived back in its new position and 2/14 Bn arrived from NADZAB. On this day 2/16 Bn standing patrol across the UMI occupied SAGERAK, the enemy having withdrawn after a fierce fight. Lieut FRAZIER (Air Borne Engrs) selected and prepared an air strip big enough for a CUB to land on, North - West of the village.

Our positions at the end of 25th September were as shown on the following sketch, which also shows the moves from the 22nd to the 25th September.

On the morning of the 25th General VASEY visited me. Prior to his arrival, a Douglas Dive Bomber had landed on the strip to take me on a reconnaissance flight up the MARKHAM VALLEY. I was just about to take off when the General landed in his CUB. He told me to have a look at the country about the UMI. He said he felt that, if the Jap decided to attack us, then the area between the UMI and KAIAPIT was a good place to destroy him. He would wait till I returned and then I could let him know what I thought of the country - he had flown over it in his CUB - and we would discuss further action.

I flew up the MARKHAM and down the RAMU to beyond DUMPU, looking particularly at the country through which the Jap track was thought to go from the GUSAP RIVER to the UPPER FARIA. Then I examined carefully the country East of the UMI.

I agreed that if the Jap ventured on to the low country East of the UMI, then it would be to our advantage and, with 25 Bde with us, we could fight a winning fight there. I did not think the Jap would do this as he would have difficulty in maintaining sufficient force.

The General was waiting for me when I returned. He thought the Jap would still attack KAIAPIT, it being his custom blindly to persevere with a plan once formed. I told him my views. He told me he wanted to get 25 Bde to KAIAPIT before he made any forward move - originally the idea had been to fly this Brigade in further forward after we had secured a landing ground farther West. Thus we were to remain concentrated as we were. We were to recce crossings over the MANIANG with the view of preparing a good jeep track and we were to patrol to ascertain enemy moves, positions, and intentions. In this patrolling we were to create the impression of minimum strength in the hope that this would encourage the Jap to attack us.

So we waited at KAIAPIT.

Since our arrival, rear installations had been building up. On the 26th, the second strip was well advanced. During the day I visited the rear areas and had lunch with an American Anti-Aircraft Unit. Then, I had a quick look over the administrative lay-out.

On the morning of the 27th Lt-Col PARAVICINI arrived with a letter from the General. This letter read:-

Dear Ivan,
"This will introduce Lt-Col PARAVICINI who is a British Army Officer and who is returning to the Middle East shortly. He will spend a couple of days with you and I would be glad if you would show him something of conditions in this part of the world."

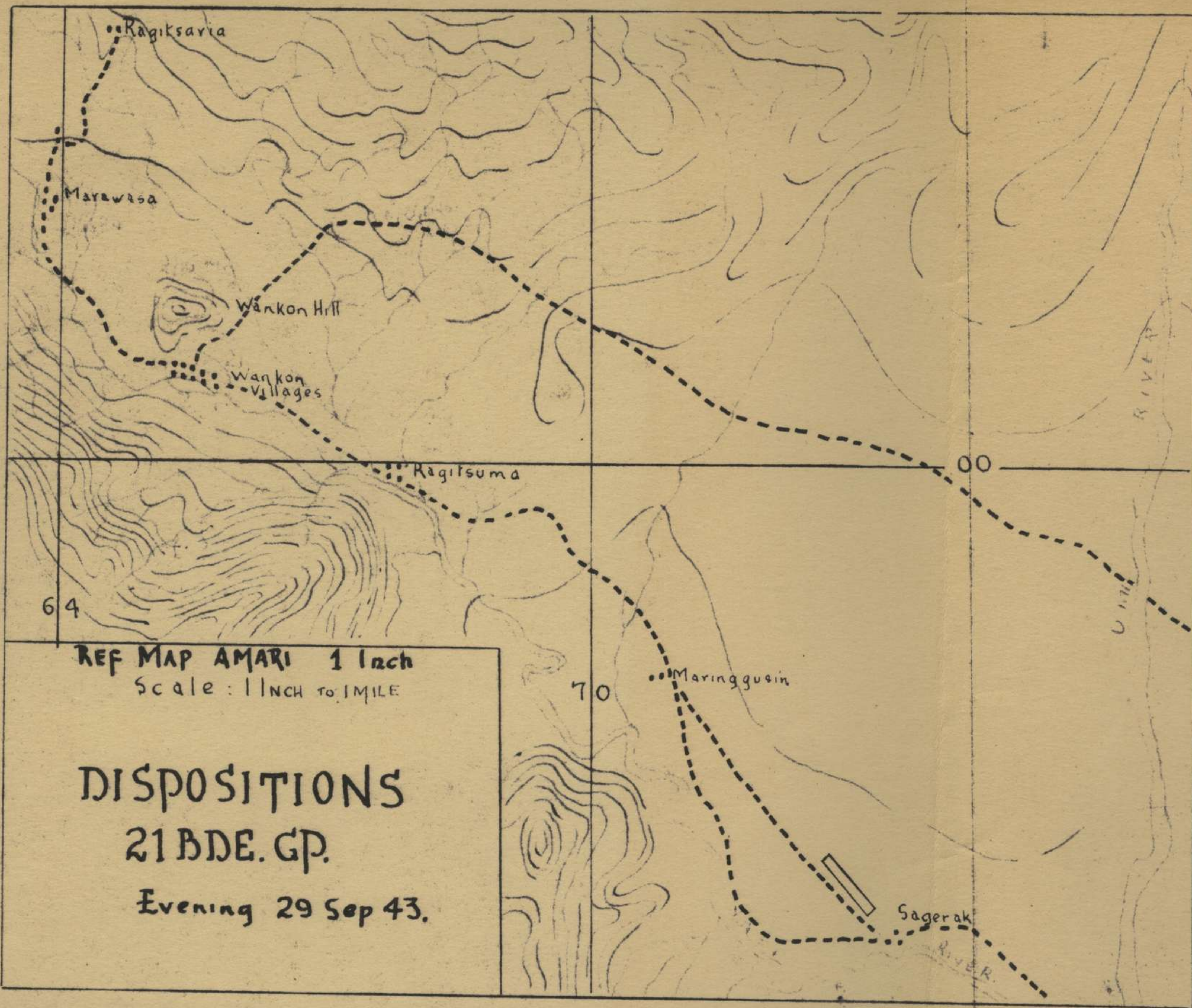
"I am terribly sorry about the delay in getting 25 Bde up to your area but I cannot guess when the move will be completed. In the meantime I would like you to get all possible information of the Jap, particularly in the foothills East of the UMI. I have a feeling that he will not now attack us at KAIAPIT, but has withdrawn 51 Div to MARAWASA area where we shall have to attack him. If you can confirm this feeling for me it will save time when 25 Bde does come up and I remove your leash."

"Will you consider the possibility of crossing the UMI at night so as to get a flying start for MARAWASA at daylight on the day you do move? I don't know whether this is practicable."

(I am the Terrible)
"I expect GOC, NGF, as well as GOC, 1 Aust Corps, to see me today and I may be able to do something to accelerate concentration."

your, G. Vasey.
Late on the evening of the 27th, I received a signal from Div stating that, if I were convinced there were no enemy East of the UMI, I was to cross the UMI on the night 28/29 and to proceed to MARAWASA with all speed.

27 Sep 43
0800 hrs.



I knew that there were parties of the enemy East of the UMI but, as I was certain he was not in strength and would not move against us there, I decided to prepare to move as directed on the night of 28/29 September.

During the day (27th) Brig EATHER and some of his brigade arrived and I moved 2/16 Bn to the YAFATS RIVER.

On the 28th I moved two companies of the 2/16 Bn across the UMI to protect the crossing that night. At dusk the brigade commenced to cross in five rubber boats (two men in each) at a time. The boats were tied together and pulled across. It was slow work and the crossing was not complete by day light. The latter portions of the 2/27 Bn crossed by wading.

After crossing, the Brigade concentrated between the UMI and SAGERAK and commenced to advance at 0630 hrs.

By evening the positions reached were as shown on the sketch below.

During the day no enemy opposition was met, but the advance was strenuous. We dragged some jeeps and some light guns across the UMI after first light but the road about two miles beyond SAGERAK became bad and soon impassable. Much work had to be done on it; it was not ready for jeeps beyond MARINGUSSIN until the following day.

The air strip near SAGERAK was prepared during the day by PIB and the Brigade Guard Platoon. Transports landed during the afternoon bringing in jeeps and trailers, among other things.

In the afternoon the General landed in his CUB and visited me at RAGITSUMA. He told me of his intentions for the future. These were set out in a document, of which he left me a copy:-

DEVELOPMENT OF OPERATIONS

Secret.

"All our information points to the Jap withdrawing NORTH-WEST to the MARAWASA area. Whether he will attempt to hold the line of the GUSAP RIVER or will continue to fall back towards his MT road from BOGADJIM is not yet clear. His main line of withdrawal is along the NORTH-EAST side of the valley to the GUSAP; just where the track goes from there is not clear, but air recce suggests that it proceeds along the SOUTH bank of the GUSAP as far as BOPARIMPUM which the Japs may call BUMBUM, since a patrol of 2/7 Aust Indep Coy in BUMBUM very recently reported it empty and no signs of movement.

"It seems likely that 21 Bde will reach the MARAWASA area today, 29 Sep. It is not my intention at present to follow the Jap along the NORTH-EAST side of the Valley, but rather to move along the SOUTHERN side and secure his crossings over the GUSAP RIVER, wherever they may be. To implement this, 21 Bde will move along the SOUTH side to the GUSAP RIVER and then EASTWARDS until the Jap crossing is located. The Brigade will leave a small detachment in the RAGITSARIA area to watch, harry and follow up the Jap in his withdrawal.

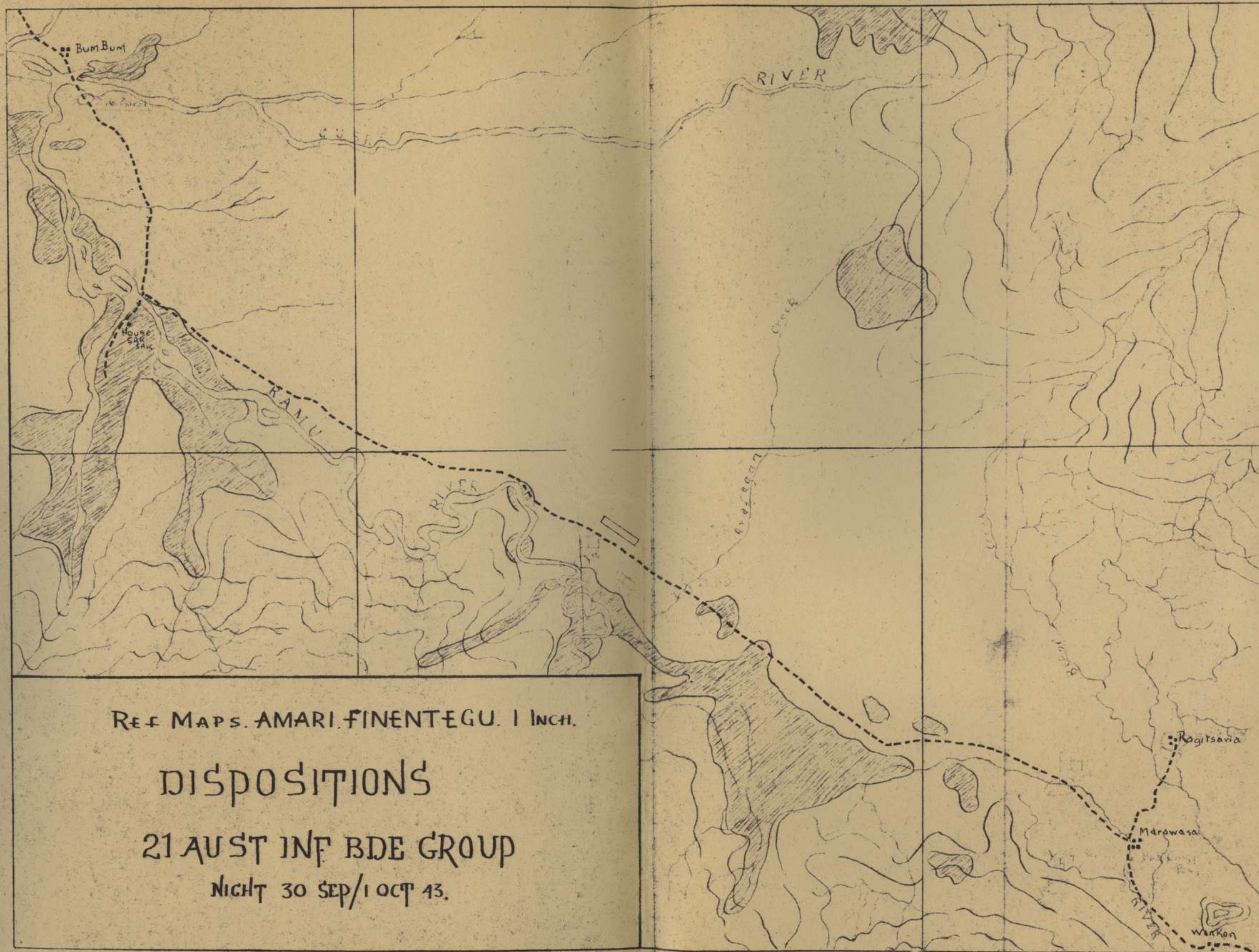
"25 Bde will move to the MARAWASA area, crossing the UMI RIVER not later than first light, 1 Oct. One battalion of 25 Bde will remain in the KAIAPIT area for the protection of the landing strips until the arrival of 2/2 Aust Pnr Bn, which should commence arriving in the first flight of planes on 1 Oct. A recce party of the battalion will proceed to KAIAPIT on 30 Sep.

"54 Bty will remain in the KAIAPIT area and will come under command 2/2 Pnr Bn.

"The probable task of 25 Bde, after concentrating in the MARAWASA - RAGITSARIA area will be to move along the track on the NORTH-EASTERN side of the Valley as far as the GUSAP.

"It is anticipated that both Brigades will halt on the line of the GUSAP and that, whilst in this area, there will be a pause while the rear organisation is brought forward and set up."

The advance continued on the morning of the 30th September and the positions reached on the night of 30th were as shown on the following sketch.



Since early on the 29th, 2/6 Indep Coy, advancing on ATSUNAS, via the Northern track, had been out of contact. I intended to leave them to follow up and harass the enemy in the RAGITSARIA area. I could not move 2/14 Bn until I contacted 2/6 Coy, and this was not done till late in the day. Thus 2/14 Bn did not advance far. I remained behind until the 2/6 Coy were contacted, while the personnel of Bde HQ moved to ARIFAGAN CREEK. I could not find a jeep track through to ARIFAGAN CREEK, though several attempts were made; as it became too late to reach Bde HQ on foot, I spent the night in MARAWASA area where I had communication with my supply installations and with Div. Wireless communication had failed between Bde Comd Post and 2/16 and 2/27 Bns and I could not ascertain their exact position.

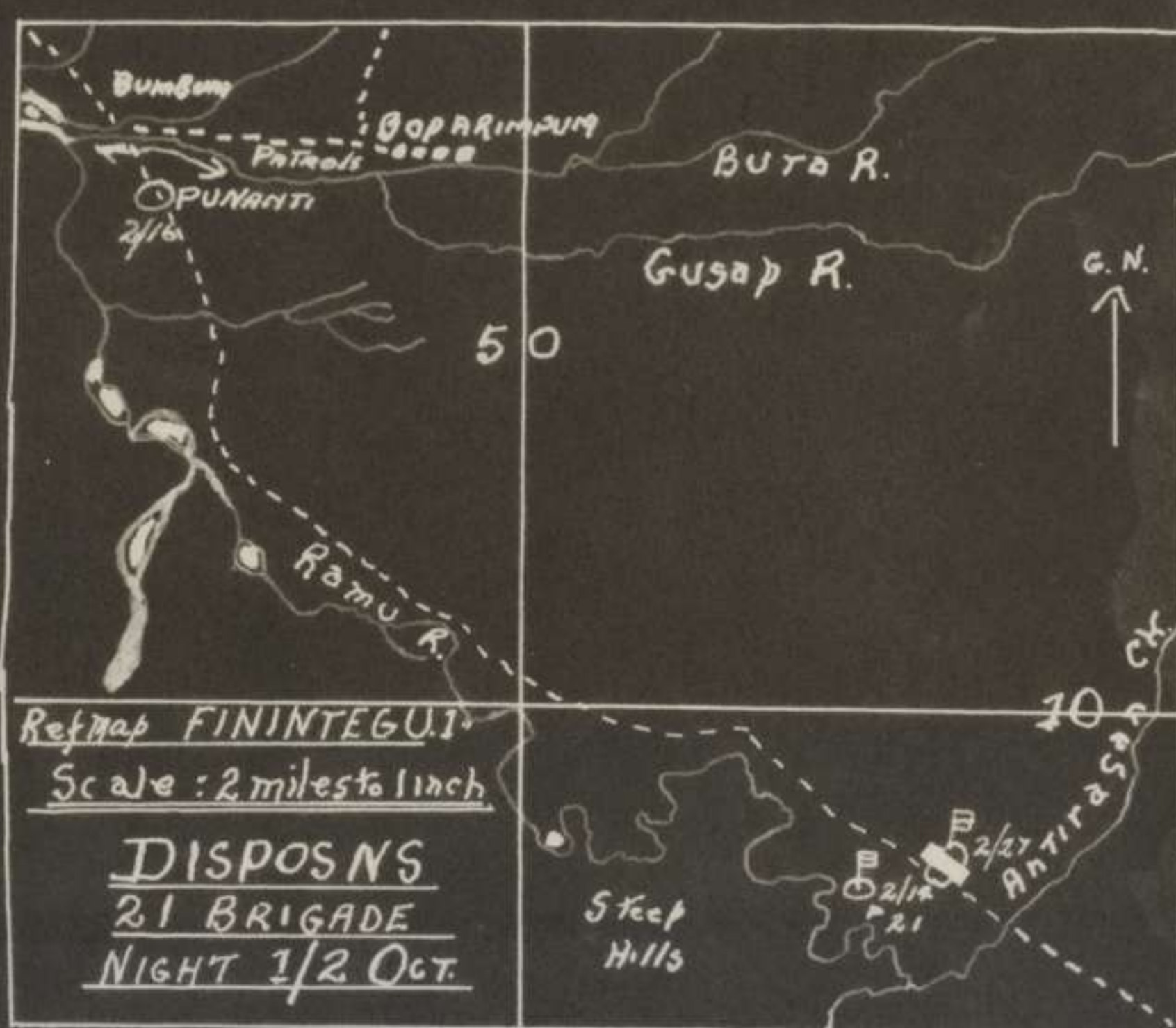
Late on the evening of 30 Sep, I received a message from Div stating that 25 Bde would not cross the UMI until further orders from Div. No reason was given. This affected my decision concerning the moves for 1 Oct. If 25 Bde were to follow, I could advance to carry out the role as set out in the document given me by the General on the 29th. If 25 Bde were not coming and I had to fight a battle alone, then I would have to leave some of the Brigade in the vicinity of the landing strip, and could not move it all forward.

I marched forward to ARIFAGAN CREEK early on the morning of 1 Oct. 2/14 Bn also moved forward.

Shortly after my arrival at ARIFAGAN CREEK, two CUB planes landed on the strip which was being prepared by 2/27 Bn and I moved across to them. Lt-Col WOODBURY, US Air Force, and another Lt-Col had arrived in the CUBS. The former told me that, as far as he knew, there was no significance in the hold up of 25 Bde, and that, when he saw General VASEY that morning, he had not changed his original intentions. He told me the General would visit me that afternoon.

I ordered 2/16 Bn to move to an area a little short of the GUSAP RIVER, near its junction with the RAMU, and to patrol forward to, and East along, the GUSAP. 2/27 Bn were to continue with the preparation of the air strip and that night to take up positions to protect it. 2/14 Bn were to move to the RAMU near 2/27 Bn's previous position. Bde HQ was to establish at that point.

These moves took place during the afternoon, and for the night 1/2 Oct the Bde dispositions were as shown on the following sketch.



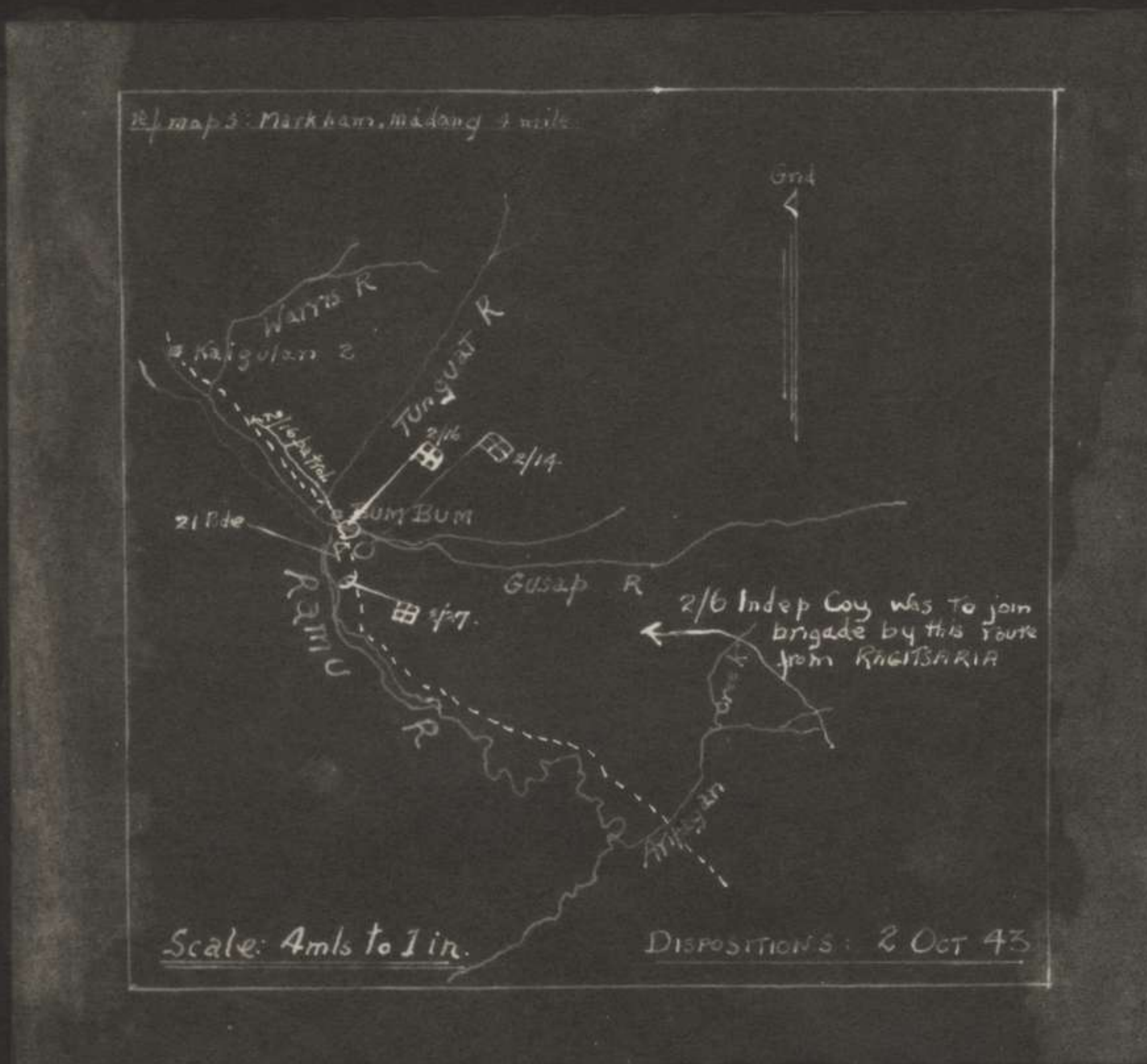
During the afternoon of 1 Oct 43, General VASEY, travelling in a transport, visited the GUSAP strip. He was accompanied by Generals MORSHEAD and HERRING.

I had expected him to arrive in his CUB and was looking out for it before going to the strip. A message saying that he had arrived in the transport took a long while to get to me; his plane could not wait long, and I arrived just as his plane was ready to take off the strip. However, he left a message and his instructions for the following day, with Col BISHOP.

These were to the effect that 25 Bde would arrive on 3 Oct and the following day (2 Oct) I was to move my whole Brigade to the GUSAP, leaving a small detachment to guard the air strip.

On 2 Oct the Brigade concentrated near the junction of the RAMU and GUSAP RIVERS. Two companies of 2/27 Bn, under Maj JOHNSON, were left to guard the air strip.

The positions reached on 2 Oct were as follows.



The Engineers set about building a bridge over the GUSAP. During the afternoon of 2nd October General VASEY visited me and I accompanied him to the bridge site.

During the day a 2/16 Bn Patrol contacted the enemy a short distance East of KAIGULAN. This was the first contact made since SAGERAK. In a short action which took place this patrol had one killed, while eight Japs were killed.

On 3 Oct (Sunday) there was patrolling only. The administrative side of affairs was consolidated. A PIB patrol contacted enemy at BOPIRIMPUM, while a 2/16 Bn patrol clashed at NAMAPUT.

The spell in this area was good for all, and good swimming in the RAMU and the GUSAP provided a diversion. The troops were fresh by Monday, the 4th of October.

When we found a good landing strip, capable of much extension, near ARIEAGAN CREEK, and when I learned it was the one the Air Force intended to develop and that they were not interested now in a strip site further West, I thought that perhaps we would not move in strength beyond the GUSAP for awhile.

However, DUMPU was the original goal for this phase of the operations; the MARICHAN VALLEY and the UPPER RAMU VALLEY were necessary for forwards airfields and, although we had now gained what we wanted, it could be protected by pushing the Jap further West. Further on, too, it was intended to establish other Air Force installations, including RADAR, and these had to be protected.

So, during the afternoon of the 3rd, General VASEY again visited me. He told me he wanted me to secure the DUMPU area, and to commence my advance the following day. His intention was then to concentrate the Division in the DUMPU area, where landing strips for transports could be made in order to bring in supplies.

On the morning of the 4th, the advance from the GUSAP commenced. 2/16 Bn were to secure a bridgehead across the SURINAM RIVER. They did this in the day, and one patrol of company strength (SYMINGTON'S) occupied DUMPU village, a detachment of enemy fleeing as the company reached the village.

2/14 Bn were to secure WAMPUN; which they did. At WAMPUN they clashed with a strong detachment of enemy and Col HONNER was among the wounded.

2/27 Bn moved in reserve and that night the Bn less three coys was at BIWI RIVER. The three coys had been left in road construction and on that night camped, two at THREE RIVERS, and one at WARRIS RIVER.

Bde HQ was established about one and a half miles West of WARRIS RIVER.

In the afternoon Lt-Col ROBERTSON, G1, visited me at this headquarters. He brought with him Lt-Col BRISCOE of the South Lancashire Regt who stayed with me for a couple of days. Col BRISCOE belonged to Gen DEWING'S Mission.

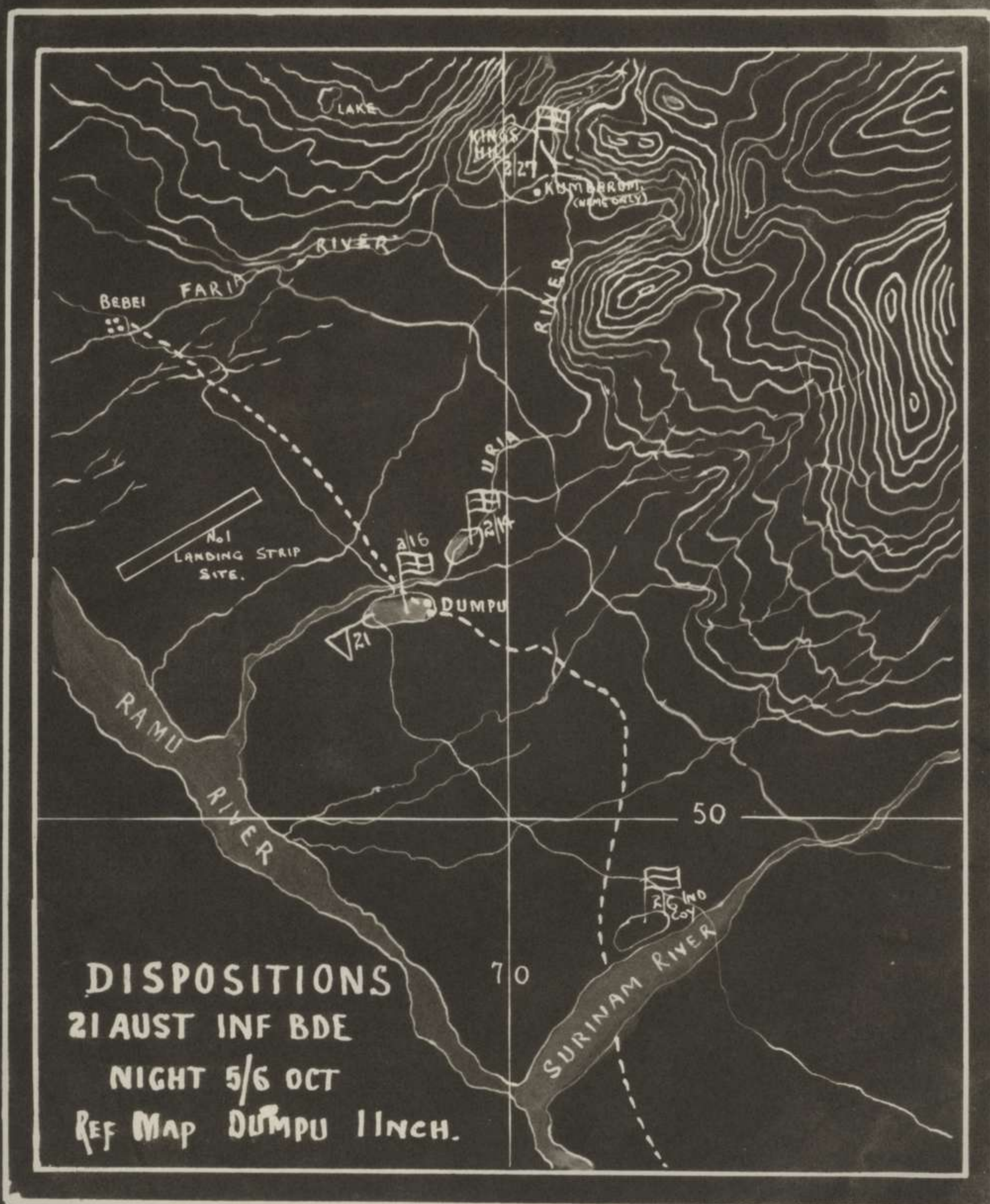
That night I received an order to "prepare to move in strength to Key Point 3. Key Point 3 was a point on the Jap Line of Communication which he had been using and which we thought he was withdrawing along. From information we had, Key Point 3 was where his track crossed the URUA RIVER; but, as the maps of this area were very sketchy, we could not be sure of that. What the Japs called "Key Points" were really staging points and dumps.

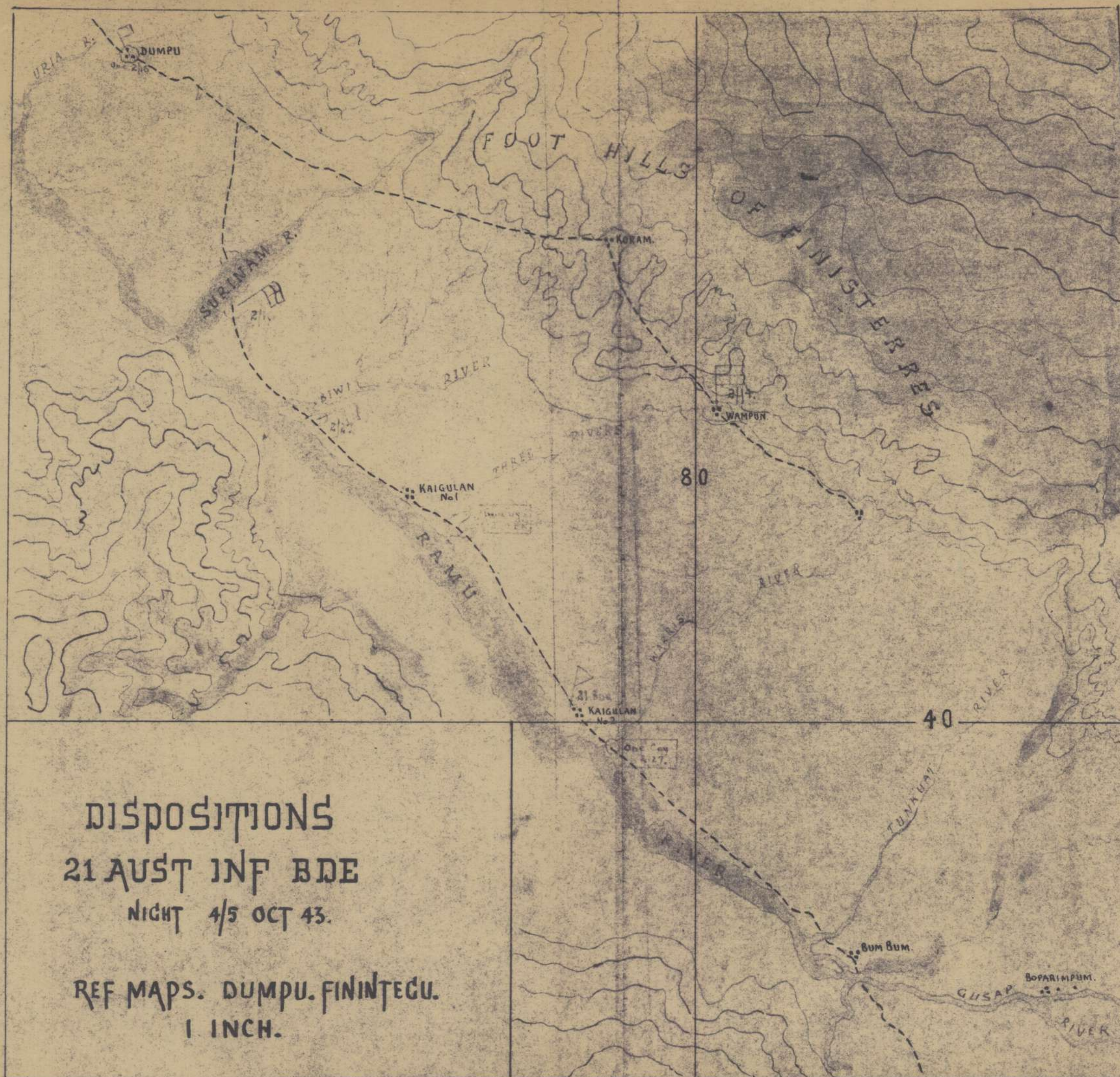
Our positions at the end of the 4th of October were as shown in the following sketch.

On the 5th the Bde completed its concentration in the DUMPU area. I told 2/27 Bn to aim at getting to KUMBARUM, but as the Bn had been relieved rather late of its task of road making, I left it to Col BISHOP to decide whether or not he could reach KUMBARUM that night or bivouac between DUMPU and KUMBARUM. I told him his Bn would lead the advance into the mountains if the Brigade were given this task.

Col BISHOP secured KUMBARUM and occupied KING'S HILL, a key feature guarding the exits of the FARIA and URIA RIVERS from the mountains. His Bn moved up the URIA VALLEY, fully deployed, with flanking picquets on the high ground. Heavy rain fell during his advance from DUMPU. Enemy detachments were occupying a strong position on KING'S HILL and on other features, guarding the entrance to the mountains; but they fled on the approach of 2/27 Bn.

Our positions at the end of 5 Oct were as shown on the sketch below:-





On the night of 5 Oct I received an order to move in strength to Key Point 3 when the administrative situation permitted it to be done. I didn't know just what "in strength" implied. However, I took these factors into consideration :-

- (a) Key Point 3 as shown on the map was more than a day's carry each way from the jeep head.
- (b) With the natives available, I could maintain only a bn a day out from the jeep head.

As a result I came to the conclusion that my move "in strength" to Key Point 3 would be limited to the sending of one bn to a base one day's carry away, this bn then sending a company patrol to harass the Jap at Key Point 3.

During the afternoon of the 6th, General VASEY visited me. I met him at the SURINAM RIVER so that he would not have to cross; but he crossed the fast flowing stream in his jeep and came on with me to my HQ.

I discussed with him how transport limitations would prevent me from sending more than one bn beyond the jeep head into the mountains. He told me that my plan to send one bn to a base a day's carry away, and then to patrol from there to Key Point 3, was in accordance with his desires and suited him admirably.

On the 6th no changes were made in the Bn dispositions. 2/27 Bn could not move until more administrative preparation was made.

On the 7th 2/16 Bn moved to BEBEL to give greater protection against possible enemy moves from the West or North-West.

It was thought that the administrative arrangements could be made sound enough by 8 Oct for 2/27 Bn to move that day, and so on the 7th Capt FAWCETT'S Coy moved to what is now known as GUY'S POST, it being the intention for the Bn to move on the following day.

During the afternoon Capt GEDDES and I visited 2/27 Bn. We climbed KING'S HILL, at the top of which Col BISHOP was waiting for us and we discussed with him the arrangements for the move on the 8th. He was to move into the mountains and occupy an area as a base, a day's carry away. His route was to be along the FARIA VALLEY to somewhere beyond GUY'S POST and then he was to take the line of a suitable spur running North-east towards Key Point 3. From his base he was to patrol to, and harass the enemy at, Key Point 3. He was to regard himself as a bn fighting patrol and need not regard his base as a fixed place that he must hold.

2/6 Indep Coy would occupy KING'S HILL when 2/27 Bn moved on, 2/14 Bn would provide escorts for 2/27 Bn's carrier line.

On the 8th 2/27 Bn moved to GUY'S POST, arriving there at mid-day. Col BISHOP decided that he would need to picquet the hills on each side of the FARIA before advancing further, and that he would need the afternoon to get the necessary picquets out. This time was needed owing to the precipitous nature of the walls of the FARIA VALLEY.

On the 9th 2/27 Bn moved to the base which was its goal. This base was then considered a day's carry from KUMBARUM; since then by finding a shorter route and by improving the track by cutting steps, the time of the carry has been cut down to three hours.

The area reached by 2/27 Bn was astride a Jap track that had been used quite a lot in the immediate past. Col BISHOP decided that it

The country to the North-west, North and East of KUMBARUM is very difficult. The steep hills are covered with tropical rain-forest. Good OPs are hard to find once one gets beyond the kunai covered lower hills. The maps available during our operations in the mountains were sketchy and unreliable. Aerial photographs were few. It was exceedingly difficult for patrols, and even for 2/27 Bn, to give exact locations. Later, it had to be arranged for flares to be put up from various positions, including those occupied by standing patrols, in order that bearings could be taken from suitable OPs. By this means, a reliable sketch of the area we were working on was obtained.

On the 10th, 2/27 Bn were shelled and subjected to machine gun fire.

From KING'S HILL a narrow knife-edge leads North and on to what is now known as PALLIER'S HILL. PALLIER'S HILL was not occupied by 2/14 Bn. Early on the morning of the 11th it was reported that enemy were digging in on the feature now known as PALLIER'S HILL. They were firing on Bn HQ at KUMBARUM. It was later found that these enemy were a Jap coy withdrawing from somewhere East of KUMBARUM. Two platoons had established themselves on PALLIER'S HILL, and the third platoon, and Coy HQ, on a feature North of 2/27 Bn's L of C.

About mid-day on that day I sent Maj LEE of 2/16 Bn to command 2/14 Bn vice Maj LANDALE.

At 1650 hrs Lieut PALLIER'S platoon, advancing from KING'S HILL, supported by a 25 pounder firing over open sights, by machine guns from the opposite side of the URIA, and by mortar fire, dislodged and completely defeated the enemy. The attack was carried out in gallant fashion. It was a difficult operation on account of the knife-edge joining KING'S HILL and PALLIER'S HILL and Lieut PALLIER'S platoon suffered comparatively heavy casualties.

The enemy, by getting astride our L of C to 2/27 Bn and by remaining there, caused dislocation in supplying 2/27 Bn and very nearly influenced the result of their battle the next day. At the time they cut the L of C, a carrier train was taking food and ammunition forward and was on the track North of PALLIER'S HILL. The supplies were dumped along the track by the natives when fired on and a train could not be sent through until the track had been reported clear on the following morning (12 Oct).

During the morning of the 11th, Generals MORSHEAD and VASEY visited me at my HQ at DUMPU. General VASEY told me that 25 Brigade would look after any enemy East of the URIA RIVER and I need only concern myself with operations West of it. It was clear from our discussion on this morning (between the two generals and myself) that owing to administrative limitations we could not become committed in the mountains any further than we were. Therefore there was no question of a further advance for the time being.

At 1040 hrs on the morning of 12 Oct the Jap launched an attack on 2/27 Bn. His infantry attacked from the Eastern side, supported by machine guns from the North-east, and from the West, and by a mountain gun firing from the FARIA VALLEY. The enemy was persistent. His first attack was repulsed but he made many further determined and almost continuous attempts to capture 2/27 Bn's position, each time being defeated.

2/27 Bn had only HQ Coy and two rifle coys holding their position. During the afternoon, Col BISHOP considered that his ammunition might not hold out. I told him that, whereas I would like him to hold the position, he was occupying astride the track, I did not want him to remain till the situation became so serious (if it did look like doing so) that he could not get out. If he felt that

his ammunition could not last he was to withdraw to the vicinity of GUY'S POST. I sent a company of 2/14 Bn to GUY'S POST to be in a position to support him. I had already sent a platoon of 2/14 Bn to relieve a 2/27 Bn platoon at GUY'S POST.

The seriousness of the ammunition situation at 2/27 Bn was mainly due to the interference with the L of C near PALLIER'S HILL on the 11th. (Also see Staff Captain's Report.)

The battalion tenaciously held its ground and, by night, the Jap had had enough. An ammunition train reached the battalion at 0230 hrs on the 13th. Capt TOMS' Coy, which had been out on patrol, contacted and assisted the unit in the later and more critical stages of the battle. The platoon relieved at GUY'S POST and another platoon, CROCKER'S, rejoined the unit at 0230 hrs on the 13th.

I felt confident, and so did Col BISHOP, that the unit would be secure if attacked again the following day. As an extra measure I ordered Capt CHRISTOPHERSON'S Coy of 2/14 Bn to move from GUY'S POST up the spur leading to the high ground South of 2/27 Bn, so that it could assist 2/27 Bn.

The night of the 12th was quiet and, since that day, up to the present the Jap has shown no inclination to attack us. (19 Nov).

2/27 Bn's victory was one that was of great credit to the unit. The Jap left over 140 dead outside the Bn perimeter. Later it was found that he had attacked with a Bn plus a Coy.

Other reliable information has shown that 2/27 Bn were astride the Jap track being used as his main carrier route, although there is a well used track further North. This Northern track is side-cut, round the hills, is surveyed, has a good grade; it would appear that it was originally intended to continue the motor road from BOGADJIM along this route.

Further, 2/27 Bn were at Key Point 3, and East of them were the remnants of two battalions of 78 Jap Regt. These Japs apparently withdrew from the front of 33 Bn when the Jap attempt to dislodge 2/27 Bn failed, for they broke contact with 2/33 Bn shortly afterwards.

On the morning of the 13th, General VASEY visited me. He told me that I could move 2/16 Bn from the flat and he would bring in 2/2 Pnr Bn to take its place.

I decided to relieve 2/27 Bn with 2/16 Bn and to move Bde HQ to KUMBARUM. 2/6 Indep Coy were taken from under command but I was still left with B Coy of the PIB.

On 14 Oct 2/16 Bn relieved 2/27 Bn. 2/27 Bn moved back to GUY'S POST area and Bde HQ moved to KUMBARUM.

From then on until we were relieved by 25 Bde on the 8th of November, the only changes in the Bn positions were in the form of intra battalion adjustments, with a slight creeping forward by elements of 2/27 Bn onto SHAGGY RIDGE and by elements of 2/16 Bn up the FARIA VALLEY. (See next sketch).

On 18 Oct 2/31 Bn returned through Bde HQ to rejoin 25 Bde. This left the area East of the URJA with none of our troops operating in it, except for close-in patrols from 2/14 Bn

On the 20th General VASEY told me he wanted me to do some deeper patrolling in this area. One of the patrols sent out was despatched to the area indicated in the next sketch. It discovered where



DISPOSITIONS PATROLS ETC. 21 AUST INF BDE & ENEMY 7/8 NOV 43.

Musgrave, J.

the KANKIRYO mule track branched off the trail leading West to 2/16 Bn, and contacted several Jap patrols moving in this area.

The country in this area was very difficult. Information was slow in being found. It was difficult to find out where tracks led to, and where they joined up with other tracks.

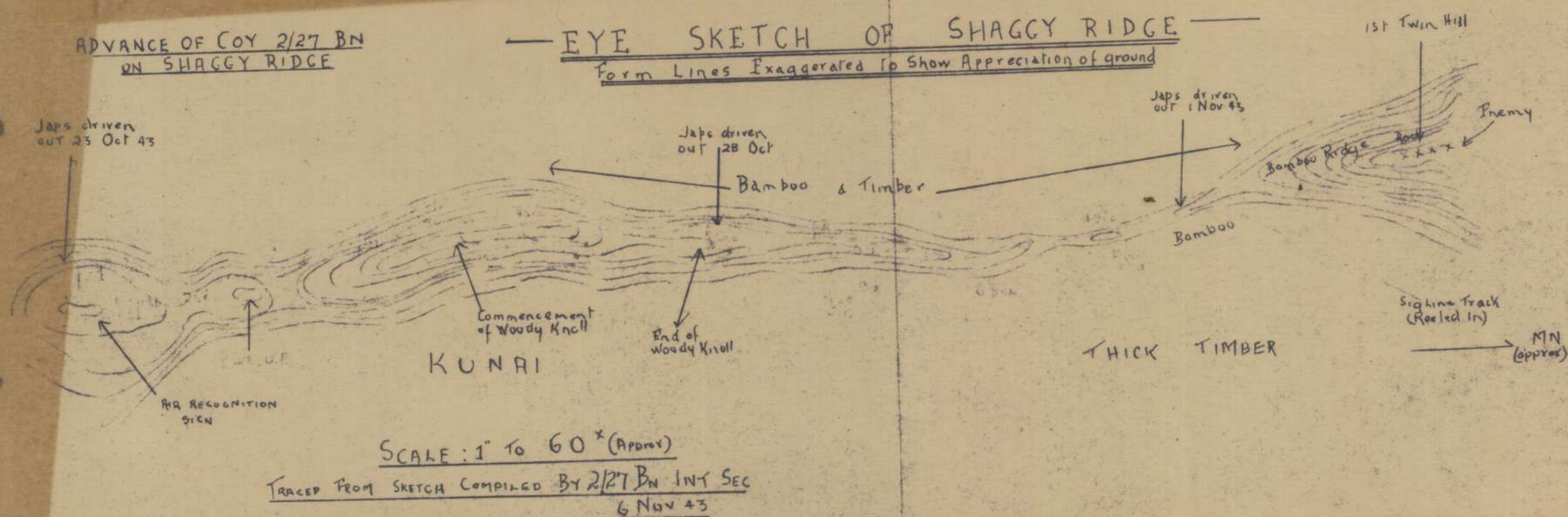
On 26 Oct General VASEY called on me on his way through to visit 2/16 Bn. He told me he would place 2/2 Pnr Bn under my command so that I could have a stronger force about the headwaters of the URUA RIVER. This Bn could continue patrolling towards BERRINGE, North-west along the KANKIRYO Mule Track, and in other directions. 2/2 Pnr Bn reached the position indicated in the following sketch on 30 Oct.

Our positions when relieved by 25 Bde on 7 and 8 Nov were as shown on the accompanying sketch.

During this campaign we secured the objectives we set out to secure. We gained forward air fields in the RAMU VALLEY.

Now it was a matter of settling down to protect them. Administrative problems, apart from any tactical ones, prevented an advance any further towards MADANG.

The policy as stated by General MORSHEAD on 11 Oct had not changed by the time we were relieved. The task of the Division was still to hold what we had gained and not to advance any further.



There has been much improvement in the attention being paid to camouflage and concealment.

6. MAINTENANCE OF THE OBJECTIVE.

Our objective was the securing of the MARKHAM and RAMU VALLEYS as far as DUMPU.

By keeping our eyes on this objective and making for it with all speed, we defeated the enemy.

Had we lost sight of our objective and gone hunting the enemy in the foothills, we would have paid a far higher price for our victory.

7. CONCENTRATION OF FORCE.

In the early planning stages it was considered that one parachute battalion might be sufficient to make the landing at NADZAB. The GOC, 7 Aust Div, felt that the principle of concentration required that the whole regiment should be used. Higher authority readily agreed.

During the advance from KAIAPIT, the GOC, 7 Aust Div, applied this principle of concentration of force in keeping 25 Bde sufficiently close to 21 Bde as to be in position to support it if the need arose.

It has been a sound plank in the platform of 7 Div's strategic and tactical policies that sufficient concentration of force should be allotted to a task to ensure success. The policy has opposed the launching of single brigades into areas where Japanese strength that might be brought to bear against them is not definitely known.

Throughout the operations, within 21 Bde, the principle of concentration has been applied insofar as the demands of the other principles of war have allowed.

8. CO-OPERATION

The success gained by 7 Aust Div has been largely brought about by co-operation.

Firstly, the Brigades and the Divisional Units co-operate and work in harmony with one another.

Secondly, within the Brigade the team spirit has been fostered and has flourished.

Thirdly, the Division has co-operated with other formations and is always eager to co-operate with outside people. We have made an effort to get to know and to get on with other people, and have in most cases managed to succeed.

Fourthly there has been a fine spirit of co-operation between the Division and 5 Air Force, with whom we have worked so closely.

General BLANEY recently remarked, when discussing with the Press

the successful advance up the MARKHAM and down the RAMU, that the co-operation between the Commander of the Air Force and the Commander of 7 Aust Div was largely responsible for the speedy and successful conclusion of the campaign.

This remark was very true.

Co-operation must be attained during the training and preparation periods. It will not suddenly appear when battle begins unless it has been established in these periods.

When battle is joined, co-operation can be maintained only by means of sound communications. Sound communications are essential if control is to be exercised and all the principles of war to be followed.

In this campaign our signallers have been worthy of the highest praise. I pay tribute to the energy and resource that has been shown by the members of 21 Bde Section and the signal sections of the three battalions.

I have given a few reflections which cause thought to be given to the application of the principles of war, principles that must have been followed in the wars of pre-historic times, and must be followed by leaders who hope to be successful in the wars which will be fought in the future.

From my point of view there were "no might-have-beens" in this campaign. All ranks of the Brigade played their parts admirably. This applies, too, to the personnel of non-brigade units who were under command of, in support of, or working in co-operation with, 21 Bde.

At the same time, by considering certain aspects of the campaign, we might ensure sound action in the future, either by bringing to notice certain good features that ought to be repeated, or not-so-good ones that we might improve upon.

Let us examine these aspects under the headings of the various Principles of War, the application of which, weighed one in relation to another in accordance with the situation at the time and the commander's appreciation of the situation, will always lead an army well along the road to success.

1. MOBILITY

Good Features

(a) We used the great mobility made possible by air transport to the best advantage.

The more time that is saved in a move the greater is the mobility, we say. This saving of time is increased with sound preparation. Our preparation for this move was sound, both in the training done at RAVENSHOE, and in the preparation of staff tables, etc, done specifically for the move to NADZAB.

The training and thought that were given to moves by air while the Brigade was at RAVENSHOE, followed by our experience in the move to NADZAB, assisted us greatly in our move to KAIAPIT.

(b) Good food keeps troops fit and energetic. They are more prepared to take precautions against sickness, and so do not lose fitness and energy as the result of avoidable illness. The more fit and energetic are our troops the greater is their mobility.

During the advance up the MARKHAM and down the RAMU the food was generally excellent. There were certainly occasions when, owing to the difficulties of supply, bully and biscuits alone had to keep the human machine spluttering on; but these occasions were few.

The appearance of the modern operational and emergency rations marks progress and augurs well for the future.

Aspects where we might make progress.

(a) Bad health, by causing loss of energy in the individual and by cluttering up our armies with human bodies that are a hindrance to success, limits the mobility of a force.

In many cases precautions were not taken as consistently as they might have been. If you are an officer ask yourself did you ever see your men discard their mosquito nets on the jungle track. Did you take action against the offenders? If not you need to consider very seriously the suggestion that you might not yet be a good officer after all. Have your men ever drunk unsterilised water from innocent looking mountain streams that mature the germs of body destroying diseases? If they have, then your discipline is bad and the men are not playing in the team to the maximum of their ability.

nurture

(b) We should aim at making our troops more mobile by lightening the loads they have to carry. This can be done by the provision, whenever possible, of transport. Officers in key positions (COs and Bn Staff Officers, Bde Staff Officers, Company Comds, Staff Officers of higher formations) should not carry their own packs and bed rolls. They must conserve their energy so that, at the end of the day, they can carry out their duties efficiently, making sound tactical and administrative decisions, supervising health and other vital matters, and improving conditions for their men.

Special patrols moving over difficult terrain should be provided with carriers in order to lighten their loads and so give them added speed. This may, at times, be rendered undesirable when work-in territory held or patrolled by the enemy.

2. OFFENSIVE ACTION

Offensive action paid dividends. The rapid advance up the MARKHA and down the RAMU, with the Jap forces overlooking our advancing troops from the foot hills of the FINISTERRES, was offensive in its conception and in its execution.

Early in the campaign, at KAIAPIT, on 19 and 20 Sep, 2/6 Indep Coy provided us with an excellent example of the way offensive action leads to success. Here, the Jap was caught off his balance. The Coy Comd made a quick decision to attack, and without either delay or hesitation, the Coy launched itself vigorously against the enemy. The attack was so sudden and so strong that the Jap thought the whole weight of an Australian division had descended upon him from the skies. He was completely beaten. Had the Coy failed to act offensively the result would undoubtedly have been different. KAIAPIT would not have been secured so easily. Enemy morale would not have been given the blow it received and the whole campaign might have had a different complexion.

When 2/27 Bn were attacked on 12 Oct, they were aggressive and offensive in the area they were holding. Static troops, consisting of individuals in individual weapon pits, acted offensively, while the Bn's reserve counter attacked the Jap in purposeful fashion. Offensive action won the battle that day.

Since commencing our holding role offensive action by our patrols has undoubtedly had much to do with the absence of enemy patrols, which has been noticeable.

3. SECURITY

Good Features.

As in the first LIBYAN campaign the mood and morale of the enemy were taken into consideration in determining the steps that were taken to ensure the security of our force.

Lumbering, protective measures were not taken; the speed of the advance itself provided much security. We had no long line of communication, owing to our method of supply by air from landing grounds as we secured them, and therefore it did not matter that we had left enemy forces on our flanks as we passed, - we could have left much bigger ones.

In all cases units applied all the measures for local security as they had trained.

SECURITY OF INFORMATION.

Security of information was excellent. The destination was kept secret from all in the Brigade except key personnel until the

the parachutists landed on 5 Sep. Further, it was not known that 503 Parachute Regt were under command of 7 Div and participating with us, until the landing had taken place. This excellent security of information did much to ensure the security of our force while air borne and immediately after landing.

In order to prevent leakage of information to the enemy, COs have insisted on members of patrols being inspected before the patrols have set out, and stripped of all documents that might assist the enemy.

"Not so good" Features

I do not know that adequate security measures were always taken against our most potent enemies, the mosquito and disease laden water.

4. ECONOMY OF FORCE.

This principle was applied where applicable. There are no examples of its application in this campaign which warrant mentioning here.

5. SURPRISE.

Good Features.

By exploiting the aeroplane as a troop carrying medium, as we did in this operation, we gave to ourselves a great opportunity to secure surprise. The enemy may get to know that we are about to carry out an airborne operation, but providing our security of information is good (as it was in this case), there is no reason why he should find out our destination. We do not know whether he found out that NADZAB was our objective, but it is most likely he did not.

The speed of our advance from NADZAB most certainly surprised the enemy and gave us a great advantage. He was no doubt intrigued by our audacity in moving along the valley floor while he was on the high ground running alongside our route.

In a more local way the following are instances where surprise was a potent weapon in our hands.

(a) The attack by 2/6 Indep Coy at KAIAPIT. The enemy was completely taken by surprise, owing to the quick decision made by the Coy Comd.

(b) 2/27 Bn surprised 78 Regt of Nippon's Army when they moved to Key Point 3 and took up a position along his line of communication. This surprise move disorganized the elements of his force between this point and the SURINAM RIVER.

"Not so good" Features.

Since our role has become more static the need for us to conceal our positions in order to gain surprise and, at the same time, to prevent the enemy surprising us, has increased.

We tend to forget the need for meticulous attention to concealment and camouflage under these circumstances. For some time it was possible to pin-point many of our positions on high features owing to the conspicuous positions in which our shelter halves were pitched. Little attempt was made to hide our movements, both of troops and native carriers, from the enemy.

REPORT ON OPERATIONS

by Brig I.N.DOUGHERTY, D.S.O & Bar,
Commanding 21 Aust Inf Bde.

PART II - RAMU VALLEY

9 Nov 43 - 8 Jan 44.

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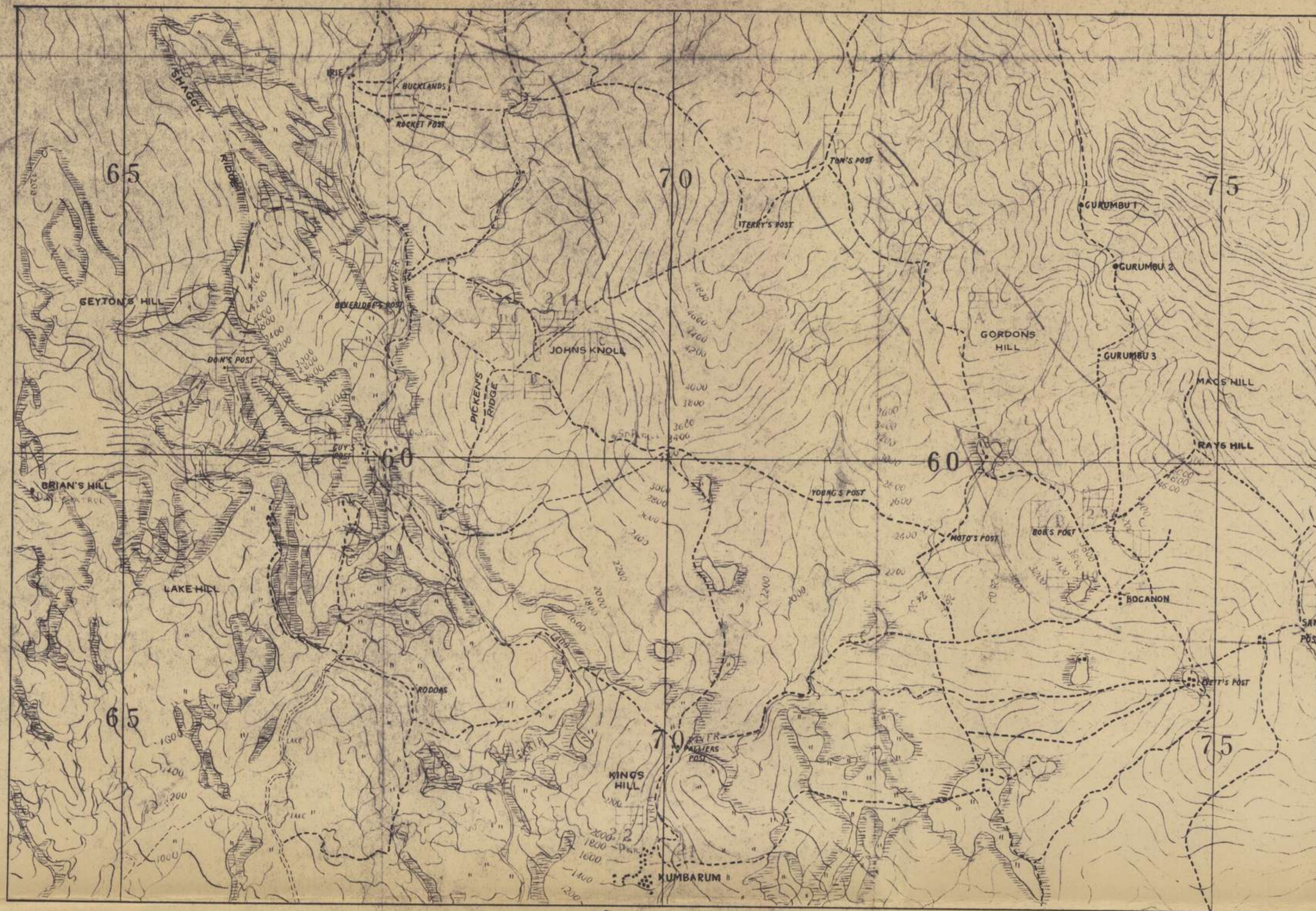
At 1530 hours on the 9th November I moved to the MENE River area, having been relieved by Brigadier EATHER of 25 Brigade. In our new position the 2/14 Bn occupied an area near the IOGE River with patrols forward to the vicinity of the EVAPIA River. 2/16 and 2/27 Bns occupied an area East of the MENE River and on the high ground North of the road. B Coy PIB, under command, were forward of the EVAPIA River with patrols on the 5800 feature.

It was the General's intention that the two Brigades (21 and 25) should change every three weeks in order to give all ranks as much variety as possible. 21 Brigade remained in the MENE River area for their term of three weeks and I returned to KUMBARUM to relieve Brigadier EATHER again on the 29 November. During our three weeks on the MENE River, the Brigade was kept quite busy. Personnel of the units were engaged on working parties on the road leading towards KESAWAI, on building the MDS near the MENE River, and on other varied projects.

Our tactical role in the area was to prevent enemy penetration to DUMPU from the direction of KESAWAI and, in order to prepare for this, I conducted exercises for COs and officers of the Brigade. From these exercises plans for the meeting of any enemy thrust were made and recorded.

I took the opportunity of holding a pre-selection board for officer candidates and this occupied several days. On 21st November, General LETHBRIDGE of the British Military Mission visited Brigade Headquarters and had a conference at which all my COs were present. We discussed equipment in the light of our experiences in the campaign then in progress.

There was no enemy activity apart from minor patrols encountered in the area of the 5800 feature.



SCALE 1:25000
REF MAP : KUMBARUM 1:25000

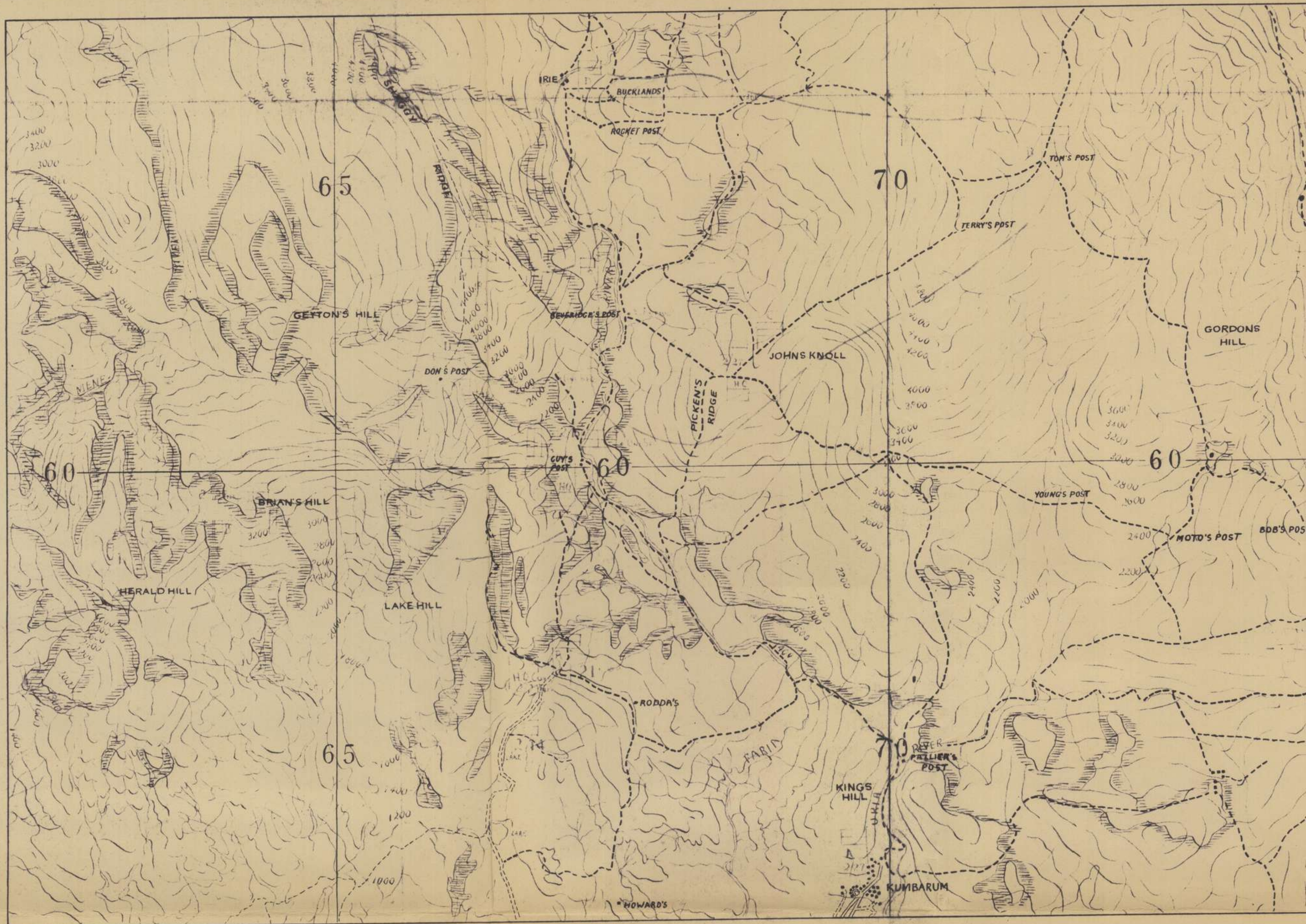
DISPOSITIONS 21 AUST INF BDE

29 NOV 43.

On the 29th November, I took over the right brigade sector from Brigadier EATHER and remained in command of this sector until relieved by 18 Brigade at the beginning of January 1944. On taking over on 29th November, I had the 2/27 Bn on the KANKIRYO Mule Track with HQ, first at BOBS POST and later at GORDONS POST, and a forward locality at TOMS POST. 2/14 Bn, with HQ at JOHNS KNOLL and with forward elements (five platoons) on the general line of MAINSTREAM, had responsibility for controlling the area to the FARIA RIVER. 2/16 Bn was occupying part of SHAGGY RIDGE and LAKE HILL, with patrols on BRIANS HILL. 2/16 Bn were responsible for the area as far East as the FARIA RIVER. 2/2 Pnr Bn were in reserve at KUMBARUM. Three coys of 2/2 Pnr Bn were despatched to the LAKES area to push ahead the jeep track from the LAKES towards GUYS POST.

For dispositions see accompanying sketch.

At 1000 hours on the 6th the GOC visited me and stayed until 1200 hours. We discussed the possibility of a raid on KANKIRYO and the carrier problem as it would be affected by such a raid. At this time our task was to provide diversions in our area in order to attract the enemy's attention while other operations were carried out on the coast to the North of us. We anticipated being relieved by the 25 Brigade again, on 21st December, and decided to carry out the raid on KANKIRYO from the direction of the MENE RIVER about New Year. This would enable the troops to have their Christmas free from much activity. On the 8th December, the enemy showed signs of aggression West of the EVAPIA RIVER, moving in strength to the area near KESAWAI. As a result of this enemy activity it was decided not to carry out the proposed relief of the two Brigades about the 21st. On the 14th December, the General visited me before lunch and we discussed changes made desirable by the enemy's apparent increased interest towards the RAMU, West of the EVAPIA. It appeared that, if there were a threat at all, then the main enemy threat appeared to be on our left. The General wanted me to swing



SCALE : 1:25000

REF MAP : KUMBARUM 1:25000

DISPOSITIONS 21 AUST INF BDE

15 DEC 43

my centre of gravity to the left in order to be in a better position to meet this threat, either by dealing with him on my own front or by moving to the support of 25 Brigade. In addition, the General wanted me to show signs of a push on our Brigade front in order to make the Jap more careful in his moves towards the RAMU. With this in view, he asked me to consider an attack along the SHAGGY RIDGE feature by the 2/16 Bn.

As a result of this interview, I brought the 2/14 Bn into reserve near the LAKES, making the 2/27 Bn responsible for anything East of the FARIA RIVER, and moved the Pioneer Bn to occupy BRIANS HILL and HERALD HILL. On the 15th December, I moved Brigade HQ from KUMBARUM to the saddle above the LAKES.

Dispositions were then as shown on accompanying sketch.

On the 18th December, I sprained my ankle and, as a result of this, the General decided that I must move to MORESBY to have an examination and treatment. He told me I would leave DUMPU Strip on the morning of the 21st and that he would meet me there before I emplaned and would discuss certain matters with me.

On the morning of the 21st, I met the General at No 2 Strip. Among other matters, we discussed the attack on SHAGGY RIDGE. On the 17th I had instructed Maj SYMINGTON to prepare a plan for this attack, to consider what his Bn's positions would be when it had been carried out, and the administrative problems involved. On the 18th, Maj SYMINGTON brought to me his proposed plan and we discussed it together. I had told him on this day that the attack would not take place before the 26th December, as I wanted all Christmas comforts to get up to the troops, and this might interfere with the getting up of sufficient supplies before that date. At the Strip on the morning of the 21st, it was decided that the attack would take place on the 27th. I was not back by the 27th, but the attack took place as scheduled, and, on this day, the position had been breached, though not completely captured. On the following two days, the 2/16 Bn captured what remained of the highest feature on SHAGGY RIDGE and then adjusted their Bn positions.

The troops had heavy support in the form of dive bombing and artillery and they carried out their task admirably. The capture of the feature reflected great credit on the men of the 2/16 Bn, as it was a difficult feature to take.

From then on things moved quickly. I was discharged from the 2/5 AGH on the 29th, having previously arranged for an air passage back to DUMPU on the 30th.

On the 29th General VASEY arrived at MORESBY on a two day visit, and I met him at 18 Brigade HQ in the afternoon. He was endeavouring to get approval to have 18 Bde sent to DUMPU; he thought that he might have some decision by noon the following day. Apparently the GOC had a highly successful day in the field of diplomacy on the 30th. This day, I returned to DUMPU. The General returned on the 31st. Early in the forenoon of the 31st, the G1 rang me to say that 18 Brigade were coming across, and also 15 Brigade, to relieve 21 and 25 Brigades respectively.

The relief was completed smoothly by planes bringing in the relieving troops and back loading with the ones relieved. Brigadier CHILTON relieved me on the 1st January and I took over 25 Brigade area temporarily, until 15 Brigade HQ arrived, in order to let Brigadier EATHER get back to MORESBY. I handed over command of the area on the flat to Brigadier HAMMER of 15 Brigade on the 7th January. 2/14 Bn was my last bn to move back; it moved to MORESBY on the 8th. I moved back on the 9th January and, by then, the complete Brigade was concentrated in POM POM VALLEY, PORT MORESBY.

So ended the campaign which commenced when we left POMPOM VALLEY for NADZAB on the morning of 15th September 1943.

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ADM REPORT ON OPERATIONS.

21 AUST INF BDE..... 15 SEP 43 - 31 OCT 43.

by Capt P.H.GEDDES , SC.

ADM REPORT ON OPERATIONS

21 AUST INF BDE - 15 SEP - 31 OCT 43

INTRODUCTION

GENERAL

After bde had been tpted from the Mainland to 6 MILE VALLEY, PORTMORESBY a period of reorgzn was allowed to sort eqpt and sups into plane loads and to establish an IOB Gp which was to remain with hy stores.

PHASE I

On Sep 15 the first planes loads of the Bde were flown into NADZAB, following the adv of 25 Aust Inf Bde in that area and from then until Sep 21 the Bde (less 2/27 Aust Inf Bn) was concentrated in that general area. On arrival, the 2/14 Aust Inf Bn were immediately ordered to CAMP DIDDY, preparatory to a move on BOANA. This necessitated the establishing of a DID at CAMP DIDDY, together with a native compound for the rationing of the tps fwd. The unit was ordered to send a patrol of 150 strong out for ten days in an endeavour to get infm re-garding the enemy. The method of maintenance was to establish a patrol base, five days out, to which subsequent native trains would build up sufficient rations to maintain the force. This necessitated an outlay of 284 natives, whilst the patrol itself was allocated 50 carriers to remain for carting of stores, etc. This patrol was cancelled at the eleventh hour. The Bn continued on towards BOANA but before reaching the objective had to be withdrawn.

In the meantime the 2/16 Aust Inf Bn (less dets at PORT MORESBY) and HQ 21 Aust Inf Bde relieved 3 Para Bn, USA, on high ground beyond YALU. The Para Bn were out of rations when we arrived and had some wounded which they could not evacuate - all of which necessitated an urgent native train.

A DID was established at YALU which was at jeep head and rationing was done by native carrier train. A Lt Sec of the Fd Amb was also set up but no contact with the enemy was made and sickness cases were our only evacuations.

On 18 Sep Bde HQ and 2/16 Aust Inf Bn moved back to MAC's CAMP and on 21 Sep marched to No 1 Strip to set up a bivouac area whilst preparing to move again to KAIAPIT. Lieut KEALY was emplaning offr and handled the move of the complete Bde (less 2/27 Aust Inf Bn), whilst Capt BUNN remained to coordinate tpt arrangements.

At KAIAPIT the Bde had to put in a temporary staff to control the drome, which, owing to lack of native labour in the initial stages, became a bottle neck and the clearing was difficult, lack of tpt and no formed tracks increased this difficulty. The Strip was later taken over by Sta Comd and additional tpt was flown in to handle all inward stores. On Sep 23 the 2/27 Aust Inf Bn arrived direct from PORT MORESBY whilst the 2/14 Aust Inf Bn, after being withdrawn from BOANA, was flown in on Sep 25 from NADZAB.

The 2/16 Aust Inf Bn was pushed out as far as the UMI R, with patrols fwd to SAGARAK. Here we were able to ration by jeep though later the track through the MANIYANG R became impassible, through seepage of swamp water and this necessitated making a new track through OFOFRAGEN thence to ANTIRIGAN.

By 27 Sep this rd was made and a warning order was received to prepare to move up the MARKHAM VALLEY.

From a hyg point of view KAIAPIT produced many problems, not the least of which were the dead Japs left unburied after the battle with the 2/6 Aust Inf Coy. In all, the Hyg Offr supervised the burial of 107. In the meantime flies became very bad.

The native labour posn after the first three days at KAIAPIT improved with the advent of 120 who were flown in from NADZAB. This was further supplemented by 180 more from NADZAB and local recruits. Finally there was a daily availability of 600. The majority of these were required for clearing a fighter strip and the handling of stores from the main drome.

PHASE II

UMI R CROSSING TO GUSAP R

On warning order being received, orders were issued for the establishing of a rear details : the three bns and Bde HQ being concentrated under MISSION HILL, KAIAPIT. Here a dump was made of all but essential stores; this included mens' sandbags containing spare clothing, etc, and units were advised that these would be flown in as soon as a new base was established. Capt BUNN was left in charge. For the move, each unit was allotted 64 natives for unit stores, incl No 11 Set - these were used in conjunction with jungle carts and it was estimated that they could lift approx 100 native loads.

Units under Comd

2/6 Aust Fd Coy
Lt Sec 2/6 Aust Fd Amb
Lt Sec 2/4 Aust Fd Regt
2/6 Aust Inf Coy
B Coy PIB

Tpt

Six jeeps and trailers carrying two days rations for the force, two jeeps and one trailer for Bde Sigs, two jeeps for Bde HQ, two jeeps for 2/4 Aust Fd Regt (for towing guns), three jeeps and trailers for 2/6 Aust Fd Coy.

The force moved up to the YAFATS R and at dusk on 28 Sep the 2/16 Aust Inf Bn moved fwd and commenced crossing the UMI R in rubber boats. The River was flowing vary fast and this made the crossing at night very dangerous, however, apart from a few "duckings" no casualties resulted.

The main force was across the River by daylight on 29 Sep, when the engrs, by means of a tractor managed to drag a jeep and trailer accross. Owing to the fact that once vehs were across, it was impossible to get them back again, a ferry system had to be instituted. Accordingly, after the first three jeeps were across, stores were carried over the stream by natives and then tpted to a dump established at SAGERAK village. At 1100 hrs PIB natives and 6d Pl were put on to the cutting of an air strip, approx 1 mile West of SAGERAK, and by 1600 hrs that day the GOC had landed in a cub plane. Owing to shortage of tpt, the arty had to ferry 25 pr amm by the jeeps towing the guns, but this was compensated for by the fact that the speed of their adv was slowed up because the track had to be made for them. Four extra jeeps and trailers for the Bde were landed on SAGERAK Strip and by first light 30 Sep the River was reported clear of stores. An attempt to ration fwd tps by jeeps on the morning of Sep 30 was frustrated, owing to the fact that there were a number of creeks to be bridged between MARRINGUSIN and WANKON. A temporary B Ech was therefore made at a Ck Junc, West of MARRINGUSIN, and as soon as the track was bridged, stores were ferried up to a new area in WANKON VILLAGE. By 1900 hrs the B Ech had been moved from SAGERAK and an issue of chocolate was made to 2/14 Aust Inf Bn, by jeep, at MARRAWASSA. A surgical team of 2/6 Aust Fd Amb reported in at 1800 hrs and set up in WANKON. ANGAU representative, WO ASHTON was contacted in RAGITSUMA Village during the day and he arranged to hand over native recruits at MARRAWASSA - 180 in all being available. Two native trains were sent off on the morning Oct 1 at first light, to ration 2/16 Aust 2/27 Aust Inf Bns. However, these units moved too fast and it became necessary for an air dropping to be called for. A breakdown in comms with the fwd bns made this difficult to tie up, consequently, when the planes arrived at 1900 hrs, the dropping area was not clearly defined and the stores were ~~mak~~ dropped in general bn areas. Though bad light high kunai and shortage of natives the resultant recovery was only 50%.

The rd held up the progress of B Ech for Oct 1 owing to the fact that after bridging a difficult stream at MARRAWASSA it was found that the rd continued onward was impracticable and a new track had to be made further to the North. B echs were then moved on Oct 2 to an area just west of ARAFAYGAN Ck and on the banks of the RAMU R. In the meantime, 2/27 Aust Inf Bn, under the direction of Lieut FRAZIER, had started an air strip. A landing of rations was requested for the afternoon of Oct 2 but instead, a drop of hard scale, was made on the completed strip. A loss of 25% resulted, mainly through the plane flying too low when drop was made, giving packages both a forward and downward velocity.

A DID was set up and all tps were issued with rations. The Lt Sec and surgical team erected a permanent centre and several operations were successfully attended to the same night.

On Oct 3 25 Aust Inf Bde took over protection of landing strip and the Bde concentrated just South of the GUSAP R. Acting on the assumption that there would be a halt for 10 or 18 days, units started a reorgzn and check on the "Q" side. Before this could be effected, orders were received to move fwd and secure DUMPU; accordingly on the morning of Oct 4 the br over the GUSAP, having been built, the Bde moved on.

PHASE III

GUSAP R to SURINAM R

Bde HQ moved to KAIGULAN II Village whilst DID and B Ech were situated just East of WARRIS R, where they were held up till a R Xing was made late in the day.

2/14 Aust Inf Bn made contact at WAMPUN; (Lt-Col HONNER being amongst the casualties). This necessitated several trips by jeeps over strange tracks to bring in the wounded to the Lt Sec at KAIGULAN II, and it was midnight before the last one was in. FSD moved into an area West of WARRIS R and DID drew and issued rations from there. On the following day the Bde moved fwd to DUMPU and the 2/16 Aust Inf Bn started to prepare a landing strip. Owing to the SURINAM R being impassible to MT it was necessary for the DID to be established on the R bank for the night of Oct 5. At 1900 hrs fresh meat, bread and butter was delivered by FSD, and working all night, the DID made unit breaks. At first light two jeeps and trailers were towed across the River by tractor and then were used to ferry fresh stroes to the bns. With the aid of native labour unit stores and DID were then carried across the River, which was flowing fast owing to rain the night before, and had risen some 18 inches.

By the evening of Oct 6 the DID and Lt Sec were established in a patch of jungle adjacent to DUMPU Village. The method of evacuation and sup was rather tenuous as FSD delivered rations to the Eastern bank of the SURINAM. This meant a permanent team of natives had to be posted at this spot. Stores were off loaded and carried across the stream and Bde jeeps brought same fwd to the dumps. These same jeeps were used to evacuate from the Lt Sec to the River and FSD vehs passed them on to the Lt Sec att to 25 Aust Inf Bde at KAIGULAN II.

Two air strips were immediately marked out to the West of DUMPU village and work was started forthwith.

By this time boots and socks had worn out and the posn was acute. Although stocks were available at GUSAP, tpt was unavailable. Riflemen had to be left behind for want of boots and the posn may have become more serious had not stocks arrived. The question of sprags needs more research as it is too late to experiment after tps are committed. The brass studs may be the answer but are useless when put on with tacks. Continual immersion in water creates many difficulties in this direction.

PHASE IV

DUMPU - URUA AND FARIA VALLEY

Whilst the airstrips were being completed, engrs were busy making rds on the various dromes but it was not until Oct 9 that the first planes landed. Sta Comd took control, but as they had no jeeps this necessitated a 24 hr service for Bde Tpt, through very wet weather, to keep the strip clear. This was further aggravated through Adv Div HQ moving in and a lot of stores destined for GUSAP arrived here. However, after the initial stages, everything worked smoothly and from then on Div took control of the strip and normal rationing and medical evacuations by air followed. With the advent of the air strip, regular mail deliveries were made and as a general rule from then on, the service was good.

In the meantime, on Oct 8, the 2/27 Aust Inf Bn moved up the FARIA R and took up posns on the high ground above the Eastern slopes of the Valley, their B Ech being established at jeep head KUMBARUM. In order to maintain them it was necessary to send all available natives for the initial move and owing to the fact that it was three days before they returned, the original plan of maintenance was difficult. It was not until Oct 11 that the next train departed when, owing to the Jap cutting the L of C, half an hours march from jeep head and firing on the carrier train, the natives were scattered, dumping their loads as they went. The 2/14 Aust Inf Bn then took 36 hrs to clear the track. In the meantime 2/27 Aust Inf Bn were being attacked by a Jap force of approx 1 bn and on Oct 11 amn was getting very low. At one stage this shortage made the CO give consideration

to a withdrawal but as luck would have it, the native train got through to the bn by midnight on Oct 12 and the ground was held - the Jap breaking contact next morning. A number of casualties resulted from this action over 50 being killed or wounded. These were evacuated by native carrier to a Lt Sec which had been established at GUYS POST and thence by native carrier to jeep head at KUMBARUM. That the 2/27 Aust Inf Bn's action was successful was proved by the fact that 128 dead Japs were counted, while 2/14 Aust Inf Bn in clearing the L of C accounted for 25 Japs for a cost of 4 killed and 7 wounded. The only fatal officer casualties were Lieut MARTIN, KIA and Lieut PAYNE, KIA, both of 2/27 Aust Inf Bn.

The Lt Sec of 2/4 Aust Fd Regt supported both the 2/27 Aust Inf Bn and 2/14 Aust Inf Bn throughout this period and at one stage the amn posn was so critical that all available stocks from 25 Aust Inf Bde had to be withdrawn.

In general, when the first contact was made no amn reserves were available for the Bde; landings had not commenced in any large scale and it was quite some time before fresh stocks were available.

Fresh meat and butter were available on three occasions - 7, 21 and 23 Oct - and in each case it was possible for the fwd tps to benefit. The native carry not effecting the quality to any marked degree.

On Oct 13, 2/16 Aust Inf Bn moved to GUYS POST en route to relieve the 2/27 Aust Inf Bn, these latter being withdrawn to the high features above GUYS POST. This necessitated the reorganizing of the sup line and as a result Bde HQ moved to KUMBARUM, where a native compound was set up together with the DID whilst at GUYS POST a fwd ASC was established near the Lt Sec of the Fd Amb. Each of the fwd bns (2/16 and 2/27 Aust Inf Bns) were allotted 50 natives with ANGAU representatives, for internal maintenance whilst 160 natives were established in a compound at GUYS POST for servicing the 2/16 Aust Inf Bn. This left 200 natives at KUMBARUM with a half days carry to GUYS POST whilst the turnaround fwd to the 2/16 Aust Inf Bn was also half day. By this means quite a fair res was built up at GUYS POST and maintenance was quite satisfactory. The hrs of carry were originally KUMBARUM - GUYS POST - 3 hrs (later when the track was improved this was lowered to $1\frac{5}{4}$ hrs) - GUYS POST - 2/16 Aust Inf Bn - 2 hrs.

Whilst the L of C was satisfactory, owing to the fact that the majority of the tract ran along the URUA and FARUA Rivers, there was a danger that in flood time the route would be impracticable. Hence, recesses were made for new tracks. This led to a new route being found to the 2/16 Aust Inf Bn which cut out GUYS POST - the whole trip from KUMBARUM being done in $2\frac{1}{2}$ hrs.

Samples of new emergency and operational rations were delivered whilst in this area and trials are at present being made. From all reports these are the answers to a lot of adm problems, particularly in mountain warfare.

7 Aust Div Catering Offr organised a bread baking wing at DID - two cooks per bn being supplied. This proved a great success and within four days of setting up, the output was 2000 3 oz rolls per day, it being anticipated that the out put would eventually reach 6000 per day. The rolls served as a wonderful change to the rather monotonous army biscuits.

On the Amenities side, once the Div settled in, stores came fwd and to date two issues of comforts from the GOC's Battle fund have been made, whilst ACF issues were received regularly through medium of the philanthropic representatives.

Once the situation became static after the crossing of the SURINAM R, Ord stores were flown in and the reequipping of the bde was undertaken. Clothing and boots had deteriorated since leaving PORT MORESBY and this necessitated an almost 100% replacement. By the end of Oct, the units had been re-equipped with all essential items and were reasonably fitted out.

On Oct 28 the 2/2 Aust Pnr Bn bivouaced at KUMBARUM and next day moved with 230 carriers to LEVETTS POST. Here a DID and native compound were set up. The original track was a very difficult one and the turn around of natives was 2 days, later it is hoped that a new route will be found to cut this down to one day.

A 14 day patrol of 6 Australians was organised to go out from 2/16 Aust Inf Bn on Oct 30 and this has been dealt with fully in Appx "A".

MEDICAL

The health of the tps has caused some concern and the sickness evacuation at the end of Oct was 27% of the original Bde that arrived at NADZAB. This figure was arrived at after allowing for all sick who had been evacuated and returned ex MDS. Comparative figures for the evacuations during the various phases are shown as Appx "B", whilst Appendices "C" and "D" give the details of all evacuations to date.

Malaria seems to be the reason for the majority of evacuations but the figures do not disclose the true posn as there are a number of cases shown as PUO later proved to be malaria.

The value of the Lt Sec accompanying the Bde is undoubted and it is considered that on a move similar to the one undertaken, this should be supplemented by a holding Sec with surgeon att. This then enables the Lt Sec to work with the fwd tps, whilst the Holding Sec can remain more static. The control of evacuations at the various air strips en route was a Bde responsibility on several occasions, whereas it is considered, the job could have better been done by a Holding Sec.

Evacuations at the UMI and SURINAM Rivers were difficult owing to the bottle necks created. Had hy casualties eventuated at either place the problem of their subsequent evacuation would have been difficult and here, it would appear that it is essential that any advances should be assisted by higher authority having facilities available to take over such bottle necks early.

Stretcher attachments to jeeps proved satisfactory and it is essential that every jeep att to the Bde during ops should be fitted with one. Each RAP should be equipped with a quantity of blankets for making "bush" stretchers, and there should be sufficient available to make an immediate replacement.

But for the fact that the Med plans allowed for the treatment of malaria and PUO at MDS NADZAB and later at DUMPU, the evacuation figures would be more alarming. Notwithstanding, it is apparent that the necessity of rigid anti-malarial control and strict attention to water hyg is not exaggerated and the effective fighting strength of a force can be decimated if there is laxness in control.

ASC

(i) During the rapid adv, little opportunity was given for the rationing of the tps. The speed of adv in most cases made it impossible for the DID, with limited tpt and rds available to catch up to the fwd tps.

Since the situation has become static rations have been a regular delivery and the scale of commodities delivered gives a good balanced diet.

Fresh meat, bread and butter made welcome additions from time to time. The new op ration is welcomed on all sides and it is the answer to all rationing on the move, both from the point of view of compactness and food value. It gives the tps when on the move, far more individually than a normal landed ration would, under the same circumstances, because a lot of the commodities on the SWP scale are not practical for the man to carry. The old style of emergency ration did not prove a success as, once the tins got a few knocks water and moisture made the contents useless. The new emergency, being in a sealed contained should overcome this difficulty.

AMN

(ii) There is little or no comment to make except to say that trouble was found with water affecting the 2" Mor bombs and it is suggested that some system of waterproofing the propellant charge is necessary.

TPT

(iii) The scale of tpt issued was definitely insufficient for the type of op just completed and, notwithstanding that the fact that a Div tpt pool is envisaged as being the adm answer, this will only be effective if there is a definite minimum scale laid down. Also, each bn must have permanently att, a certain number and it is felt that the following are the bare minimum essential where rds are almost negligible :-

<u>Bde HQ :</u>	<u>Jeeps</u>	<u>Trailers</u>
Comd Post - 1 jeep and trailer		
A & Q - 1 " " "		
B Ech - 2 " " "	4	4

<u>Sigs</u>	<u>Jeeps</u>	<u>Trailers</u>
Line truck - 1 jeep		
Stores - 1 jeep and trailer	2	1
	6	5
<u>Bn</u>		
Comd Post - 1 jeep and trailer		
RAP & BHQ - 1 jeep and trailer		
Mortars & Vickers - 1 jeep and trailer		
Amm - 3 jeeps and trailers		
B Ech & Q - 3 jeeps and trailers	9	9
Total for Bde	33	32

This does not allow for the shifting of a unit in one lift for even essential fighting stores but it does allow for sufficient amm to be carried within the Bde to act as an immediate res. By the same token, there would be sufficient tpt to carry one day's res ration which could be got up to the units in the event of airdroppings or landings failing.

In actual fact the shortage of amm, which almost caused the 2/27 Aust Inf Bn to withdraw on night of Oct 12, was in part due to the fact that in the original move from KAIAPIT there was not sufficient tpt to carry a reasonable res on amm. This, combined with the fact that no planes had landed at DUMPU bringing in further sups, was the reason for the shortage.

NATIVE LABOUR

(iv) It was found that with the shortage of tpt 64 natives per unit were not sufficient, also because the engrs could not keep up with the speed of adv of the tps it was essential that in some cases of urgent stores there had to be 100% of replacement of natives available. This was particularly evidenced in 21 Aust Inf Bde Sig Sec, who towards the end of the adv had to be allotted 164 natives in addition to two jeeps and 1 trailer, so that if there was a hold up in the rds then native carriers could be used to keep comms with the fwd units. It is considered that the following is the scale of allocation of natives on an adv such as has been undertaken :-

<u>Bde HQ</u>	<u>Inf Bn</u>	<u>Bde Sig Sec</u>	<u>B Ech</u>	<u>Total</u>
50	160	170	100	800

There should also be an allocation of one ANGAU representative for every 70 natives for the maintenance of proper control. The practice of working on a bare minimum owing to scarcity of tpt, be it jeep, air or native, has its own repercussion and administratively the effectiveness of a fighting force increases or decreases according to the amount of tpt immediately available for its own use. The attendant danger of a force moving too far from its source of sup is obvious and where this is necessary, then that force must have sufficient reserves within itself to deal with any normal opposition.

PROVOST.

(v) The duties of a Pro det did not vary from the normal, they being used in the main for drome control, check posts, control of R Kings, etc. When the posn became static their value was increased, and units were able to keep a fairly accurate trace of evacuation of casualties beyond MDS by air, etc, by means of the check posts.

"A" MATTERS

(vi) The normal difficulties of comms on the march made the rendition of daily strength states difficult and similarly in the early stages of the adv, the DRIS service to Div at KAIAPIT (this was done by Bde DR) did not prove satisfactory and strength states had to be submitted via fullerphone. The importance of advising immediately, particulars of all offr evacuations and the keeping of a close watch on the question of placing offrs on PSL and RSL cannot be stressed too highly. It was found that a daily dissection of evacuations, as per Appx "C", was helpful in keeping a close watch on losses.

On the Ord side the innovation which proved a universal success was the US Pattern 2 man tent, the tps finding them a great boom, particularly when working up the URUA and FARUA Valleys with almost daily rains. The US Pattern shovel was the answer for the inf where only limited tpt is available.

Appx "E" shows the losses of controlled stores over the period. In conclusion, it would appear that each type of campaign has its

Own individual problems and it is impossible to lay down a rule of thumb for dealing with any or all of the problems. One thing however is obvious and that is that so long as the native carrier is the means of tptn there will be limitations administratively, owing to the fact of the "Snowball" effect of rationing the native, who are carrying the rations for the natives who are carrying the rations for the forward troops.

ADM INSTN - 14 DAY PATROLPERSONNEL(a) Full patrol - 30 Oct - 12 Nov 43

<u>Unit</u>	<u>Aust</u>	<u>PIB</u>	<u>Load Carriers</u>	<u>Ration Carriers</u>
2/16 Bn	3			
Sig Sec	1			
ANGAU	1		7 (6 personal boys)	16
PIB	1 (sgt)	6	(1 for 208 set)	
Total	6	6	7 (Supplied by PIB)	16

(b) Extra natives for stage 1

(Depart 2/16 Aust Inf Bn AM 30 Oct - reach Stage I PM 30 Oct and return via 2/16 Aust Inf Bn on PM 2 Nov).

<u>PIB</u>	<u>Ration Carriers</u>
2 / 1 Boss Boy x	19

(c) Extra Rations for Stage 2

(Depart 2/16 Aust Inf Bn AM 30 Oct - reach Stage 2 PM 1 Nov and return via 2/16 Aust Inf Bn on PM 6 Nov).

<u>PIB</u>	<u>Ration Carriers</u>
2 / 1 Boss Boy x	35

(d) Grand Total to Bivouac 2/16 Aust Inf Bn PM 29 Oct :

<u>Aust</u>	<u>PIB</u>	<u>Load Carriers</u>	<u>Ration Carriers</u>
6	10	9	70

/ - Carry own rations. x - Boss boys also carry.

2. EQPT.

- (a) A 1 208 Set, 1 Verrey pistol and red, green and white flares.
 (b) Carried on man - 4 days emergency, 1 days hard, personal weapons and normal amm..

NB - Each Aust will have a native to carry gear. Rations are NOT for consumption but only to be used as an emergency, if cache is lost.

3. RATIONS

- (a) The patrol will RV at 2/16 Aust Inf Bn for night 29/30 Oct and they will be rationed by that unit for evening meal on 29 Oct and breakfast on 30 Oct. DID will arrange to supplement 2/16 Aust Inf Bn's rations accordingly.
 (b) Native train mentioned in para 1 will load at DID 0830 hrs 29 Oct and with ANGAU representative in charge will report direct to 2/16 Aust Inf Bn where that unit will arrange for them to bivouac for night.
 (c) DID will break and brand rations as set out hereunder :-

<u>Date for Consumption</u>	<u>Fd Op Rations</u>	<u>Native Rations</u>	<u>No of Loads</u>	<u>Marking</u>
30/31 Oct	12	200	16	29/30
Rations for natives to return from Stage I		46	4	1 R
Bury in cache Stage I	12	60 (Pres meat in lieu of rice)	5	1 X
1 - 2 Nov	12	154	12	31/1
Bury in cache Stage 2	12	60 (Pres meat in lieu rice)	5	2X

Date for Consumption	Fd Op Ration	Native Rations	No of Loads	Marking
Rations for natives to return from Stage 2	-	176	14	2 R
3 - 8 Nov	36	180	16	2/3/4
Total	84	876	72	

(d) Patrol leader (supplied by 2/16 Aust Inf Bn) will ensure that rations are only used as set out above. The patrol moves two days, to Stage 1, where cache is made of two days rations to be collected on return journey and on the morning of third day 25 natives whose loads have been absorbed return via 2/16 Aust Inf Bn, in charge of 1 boss boy and two PIB escorts (these latter carry their own rations and are not included in above rationing).

Similarly at Stage 2, a further days march, two days rations are hidden for the return journey and a further 35 natives in charge of 1 boss boy and the two PIB escorts (Carrying own rations) return via 2/16 Aust Inf Bn.

From Stage 2 the remainder of the party which will comprise 6 Aust, 6 PIB, 7 load carriers, 16 ration carriers, moves out with 6 days rations, returning to Stage 2 cache by evening of 7 Nov, thence via Stage 1 cache, reaching 2/16 Aust Inf Bn by evening of 11 Nov where this unit will arrange to ration for two meals and return them to own lines.

NATIVES

4. ANGAU representatives at 2/16 Aust Inf Bn will arrange through QM to feed and shelter natives from Stage 1 and 2, as they pass through and to advise this HQ that they have returned safely to base.

Capt
SC 21 Aust Inf Bde

DISTRIBUTION :

2/16 Aust Inf Bn
PIB
ANGAU
DID
21 Aust Inf Bde Sig Sec
File

EVAQUATIONS BY PHASES

Date	Phase	KIA		MBK		DOW		WIA		Accident ly wounded		Evacuated Malaria		Evacuated PUO		Total	
		Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs
15 - 28 Sep 43	<u>Phase I</u> NADZAB - KAIAPIT	-	2	-	-	-	-	1	3	-	1	-	9	-	40	1	55
29 Sep - 3 Oct 43	<u>Phase II</u> UMI - GUSAP	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	18	-	39	-	57
4 - 5 Oct 43	<u>Phase III</u> GUSAP - SURINAM	-	2	-	-	-	1	1	1	-	1	-	7	1	5	2	17
6 Oct - 1 Nov 43	<u>Phase IV</u> DUMPU	2	28	-	1	-	7	3	80	-	6	4	314	9	318	18	754
	Totals	2	32	-	1	-	8	5	84	-	8	4	348	10	402	21	883

APPENDIX C

MOST SECRET

EVACUATION FIGURES FOR 21 AUST INF BDE AS AT 0600 HRS 1 NOV 43

UNIT	KIA		MBK		DOW		WIA		MISSING		Accidently Wounded		Evacuated Malaria		Evacuated PUO		TOTAL		Returned Ex MDS		Original Strength		Reinf ts Recd		TOTAL		Present Strength	
	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs	Off	ORs
2/14 Bn	-	8	-	-	-	3	2	12	-	-	-	-	-	121	4	140	6	284	2	77	31	660	4	99	37	836	29	515
2/16 Bn	-	5	-	1	-	2	3	21	-	-	-	5	1	85	3	138	7	257	1	50	26	676	5	99	32	825	29	572
2/27 Bn	2	18	-	-	-	3	-	51	-	-	-	3	3	126	3	104	8	305	1	49	30	666	4	85	35	800	23	449
HQ 21 Bde	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	9	-	8	-	17	-	6	15	82	-	6	15	94	14	77
21 Bde Sigs	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	-	3	-	7	-	2	2	54	-	-	2	56	2	39
7 Pl Gd Bn	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	4	-	9	-	13	-	4	1	40	-	-	1	44	1	32
TOTALS	2	32	-	1	-	8	5	84	-	-	-	8	4	348	10	402	21	883	4	188	105	2178	13	289	122	2655	98	1684

APPENDIX D

DISSECTION OF EVACUATIONS - 15 Sep - 31 Oct 43

UNIT	Battle Casualties		Malaria		Dysentery		Scrub typhus		PUO		TOTAL	
	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs	Offrs	ORs
2/14 Aust Inf Bn	2	23	-	121	-	22	-	8	4	111	6	285
2/16 Aust Inf Bn	3	29	1	79	-	22	1	20	2	101	7	251
2/27 Aust Inf Bn	2	69	1	127	-	12	-	12	2	75	5	295
TOTAL	7	121	2	327	-	56	1	40	8	287	18	831

APPENDIX E

HQ 21 Aust Inf Bde
Nov 43

2/14 Aust Inf Bn
2/16 Aust Inf Bn
2/27 Aust Inf Bn

Recent checks have disclosed that the deficiencies in Ordnance stores in general are alarming. In particular the losses of controlled stores are viewed with concern and whilst it is appreciated that certain of these are inevitable in action yet it is the duty of every unit to ensure that reasonable care and diligence is taken in the protection and safe custody of any army stores if only because they are essential for the prosecution of the war.

The fact that some of the items quoted are losses by virtue of the fact that they were not withdrawn from evacuated personnel, does not minimise same, and QMs are reminded that this avenue of loss must be carefully checked.

It has taken the Brigade some months to build up its fighting equipment and losses on the scale quoted below will eventually have an adverse effect on its fighting efficiency.

Therefore, it is requested that this matter be given consideration with a view to minimising deficiencies in the future;-

ITEM	2/14 Bn	2/16 Bn	2/27 Bn	TOTAL
Dischargers Grenade	3 (1 replaced)	-	3 (1 replaced)	6
Pistols revolver .380	1	1	-	2
SMG Owen	2 (2 replaced)	4 (2 replaced)	16 (13 replaced)	22
Wallets Bren	3 (2 replaced)	9 (7 replaced)	7 (6 replaced)	19
Ord ML 2" Mortar	1	-	-	1
Binoculars No.2 Mk.I	1	2	3	6
Binoculars No.2 Mk.II	6	2	3	11
Compasses Pocket	12	1	6	19
Compasses Mk.III	1	-	-	1
Compasses Mk.IX	15	3	2	20
Watches GS	8	5	3	16
Periscopes Pocket	9	-	12	21
Barrels Bren Spare	6	-	-	6
OSMG Mags	18 (17 replaced)	25 (25 replaced)	-	43
Guns Machine Bren	-	2 (2 replaced)	2	4
Mags Bren	-	11 (11 replaced)	70 (70 replaced)	81
Boxes Belt Vickers	-	-	4	4
Lamps SDSR	-	-	2	2

Capt
SG 21 Aust Inf Bde

REPORT ON MEDICAL SERVICES

MARKHAM - RAMU VALLEYS.

by Lt-Col HUMPHREY,

CO, 2/6 Fd Amb.

.....

REPORT ON MEDICAL SERVICES SUPPLIED BY 2/6 AUST. FD. AMB. DURING

ADVANCE FROM KAIPIT TO DUMPU.

On Sunday 26th of September, HQ Coy plus a light section from A Coy and Surgical Team began to establish an MDS, having moved in from

Nadzab by air. MDS was completed in a coconut plantation near KAIPIT Mission by 9 a.m. on Monday 27th. An appendicectomy was performed on 28th September within two hours of the unit's arrival. On night 28/29 Sept. 21 Bde. began the advance from KAIPIT and Capt. WILMER plus 10 ORs advanced with 2/27 Bn. .

Liaison was maintained with Bde. HQ and light section by C.O., using M/C. for transport. Patients were evacuated by Jeep to KAIPIT the UMI River being crossed by rubber boat after Bde had crossed it. At RAGITSUMIN the CO contacted Bde HQ and after conferring with Brig DOHERTY decided that it would be advisable to call forward another section with a Surgeon to deal with urgent Battle Casualties which were expected from then on, anticipating that a strip would be made at SAGERAK and evacuation could be made to NADZAB by plane instead of the long trip by Jeep back to KAIPIT. The advance continued, a light surgical section of 9 ORs under Maj GOULSTON arriving at WANKON on evening 30 Sep. Capt WILMER's section moved from WANKON that afternoon and spent night with Bde HQ near ARIFAGAN Ck.

Constant demands for A and B Coys to be forwarded were made by CO and also by Brig DOHERTY to 7 Aust Div as it was anticipated that casualties might become heavy and flying might not be possible necessitating holding them until fit to evacuate. Maj GOULSTON was brought forward with his section to GUSAP strip area where Bde HQ was on 1 Oct and set up a holding post to hold patients and Battle Casualties until planes were available to evacuate to NADZAB. CO had given order that MDS at KAIPIT was to be emptied since it was committed there up to its stage, and it looked as though it could be able to establish at GUSAP, or even better at DUMPU when the Bde reached there. He suggested that if one Coy A or B, now at NADZAB could be forwarded to GUSAP to run an Advanced Dressing Station, HQ Coy's MDS might with advantage be held in readiness and flown direct to DUMPU thereby avoiding a heavy march and a lot of transport being used moving the heavy gear from GUSAP to DUMPU. However by this time Division had started moving the HQ Coy by air to GUSAP resulting in a lot of unnecessary work and use of MT. The post at GUSAP was manned by Maj GOULSTON's section at this stage and evacuated the following:

1 Oct	12 BCs and sick
2 Oct	17 " " "
3 Oct	27 " " "
4 Oct	50 " " "
5 Oct	40 " " "

a total of 136 in 5 days which was a very good performance considering the scanty shelter and means available.

On 5 Oct HQ Coy arrived at GUSAP, Bde HQ having arrived at DUMPU that day also. CO proceeded from GUSAP by M/C, calling at Div HQ en route, crossed the SURINAM and proceeded towards DUMPU where the Light Section with Capt WILMER had established. Darkness was falling at this stage and since CO could not locate Bde HQ and there was a possibility of his (a) being shot by our own troops or (b) being shot by the Japs, considered it wise to return to SURINAM River. At GUSAP the Medical Post was being run by Capt HELLESTRAND, Maj GOULSTON proceeding with his section plus HQ Coy to KIAGULAN No 1 where a small staging Post was established and HQ Coy equipment was dumped but not unpacked pending possible forward move. Protection was supplied here by 25 Aust Inf Bde which had followed behind 21 Inf Bde.

CO proceeded on 6 Oct to DUMPU after crossing SURINAM in early morning and interviewed Brig DOHERTY. Capt WILMER's Light Section was holding 34 patients at this stage and several severe Battle Casualties so CO decided to bring forward the Surgical team under Maj LOEWENTHAL to deal with these on the spot as they ~~would~~ certainly would never have survived the trip back to GUSAP without treatment. A theatre was set up in the patch of scrub at DUMPU by the URIA River and a surgical ward

with thatch roof was erected. This move was not favored by ADMS but proved to be effective in the long run. On 6 Oct CO returned to KIAGULAN in the afternoon and to GUSAP on the 7 Oct where Capt HELLES-TRAND was in charge and had 33 patients awaiting evacuation, and a very efficient Staging Post with Capt SMITH standing by for urgent surgery with two theatre orderlies. The GUSAP River flooded that night and CO was forced to return to the strip instead of going forward since the bridge was washed away. CO returned to DUMPU the following day and proposed visiting 2/27 Aust Inf Bn which had moved up the URUA River to GUY's Post but ADMS would not permit this and pressure of work during the days that followed unfortunately prevented COs forward liaison until much later.

By 11 Oct patients were arriving faster than shelter could be erected for them and no tentage was available. A 20 bed admission ward and 30 bed surgical ward were now in operation at DUMPU. Cooking gear in very short supply at this stage and many strange utensils had to be improvised. Div had established HQ at URUA-RAMU Junction by 12 Oct and A and B Coys were flown in on the same day from NADZAB. 21 Bde HQ moved to KUMBARUM on the 14 Oct since by passive infiltration, the MDS had surrounded them and then proceeded to develop into a Field Hospital. A light Section under Capt CHURCH of B Coy was sent to GUYS Post on 12 Oct and A Coy were sent back to KIAGULAN to 25 Bde HQ to organise evacuation from upper waters of SURINAM by Light Section under Capt WILMER which evacuated to a Staging Post under Capt SMITH, at 2/31 Bn Report Centre in the foothills where he and Maj STUCKEY were ready for urgent surgery, thence to the MDS by a Medical Staging Post under Lieut FIELD at the SURINAM Crossing.

The MDS at DUMPU was now holding 245 patients. Evacuations by air were being done through No 2 Strip DUMPU to NADZAB.

Routine work now continued until the end of the month, and the MI grew in size daily as CO had been instructed to hold as many patients as possible in forward area and RTU them from there. The highest figure reached was 805 patients, a record, considering the limited personnel and equipment at the units disposal, and that the fact that we were short of drugs etc since we had been supplying two Bdes RAPs with only a scanty reserve. The lack of Medical supplies was a feature noticed throughout the whole proceedings.

A Coy had been recalled as 25 Bde moved forward so the whole unit less EOB and sick were in KUMBARUM-DUMPU area. On 4 Dec move was commenced to new site on the MENE River. Up to the time of this move the unit had treated or evacuated 2334 cases of which 111 were Battle Casualties.

Appreciation is here expressed of the great assistance offered to this unit by 21 Aust Inf Bde at all times, and in no matter what circumstances, with Transport, labor, shelter equipment and good sound advice.


C.O. 2/6