

**AWM52**  
**2nd Australian Imperial Force and**  
**Commonwealth Military Forces unit war**  
**diaries, 1939-45 War**

**Item number: 8/3/54**

**15 Infantry Battalion**  
**August - September 1943**



OCT 1943

HISTORY OF OPERATIONS - AUG/SEPT 43

The Bns role in the SALAMAUAN - LAE operations can be divided into four phases -

- (i) The initial moves
- (ii) The attack
- (iii) The pursuit
- (iv) The mopping up

1. The initial movement by the Bn which resulted in two Coys being in the battle area in advance of the Bn and Bde are briefly as follows -

On the 1 AUG the Bn was located at MOROBE, the remainder of the Bde at BUNA. On the 2 AUG the Bn had commenced a move into the battle area, when C Coy moved to NASSAU BAY to assist the American forces at their base beachhead and for local protection.

On the 3 AUG an observer party which in effect was a recce party consisting of Bn 2 i/c and Coy Commanders and Q representative, left MOROBE FOR NASSAU BAY and TAMBU BAY battle areas. The C.O. was not permitted to move forward as at that time he was commanding all troops in the MOROBE garrison.

The Bn continued its move forward on the 6 AUG when C Coy moved to TAMBU BAY and B Coy from MOROBE to NASSAU BAY. Soon after reaching NASSAU BAY C Coy moved to a position on the left flank of the 162 U.S. Regiment and made contact with the enemy by patrols along SCOUT RIDGE south to ROOSEVELT RIDGE.

On the 18 AUG the C.O. and Bn "R" group left MOROBE for the battle area at TAMBU BAY, where they reported to HQ 29 Bde who had moved to TAMBU BAY in the meantime.

On the 21 AUG B Coy reached TAMBU BAY from NASSAU BAY by march route along the coast. On the same day the remainder of the Bn less A Coy left MOROBE for TAMBU BAY. A Coy remained at MOROBE until relieved by troops of the 2/1 M.G. Bn.

By the evening of the 23 AUG the Bn less A Coy was complete at TAMBU BAY.

Role of the 29 Bde in brief was to relieve the 17 Bde in the centre sector for the attack on SALAMAUA.

Whilst plans for the attack on the enemy's main line of defences were crystallising, the 15 Bn was held in Divisional Reserve, having one Coy only committed to patrols along the TAMBU BAY - Mt. TAMBU L of C.

On the 26 AUG the C.O. and Bn "R" group left TAMBU BAY on a three day recce of the battle front covering 29 Bde HQ, 47 Bn and 42 Bn.

On the 29 AUG A Coy left MOROBE having been relieved of their responsibilities there and reached TAMBU BAY on the night 29 AUG.



On the 30 AUG the C.O. received orders from the G.O.C. HQ 5 Div to move round the right flank of the 162 U.S. Regiment and penetrate the enemy's main line of defences from the sea at LOKANU to the top of SCOUT RIDGE at 747965 (reference map KOMIATUM 1:25000.)

II. The Attack. As the Bn was to operate out of the area of 29 Bde, the Bn was placed under direct comd of 5 Aust Div as from 0600 hrs 31 AUG. Upon receiving his orders from the G.O.C., the C.O. was informed that although the task may prove a difficult one, the crest of SCOUT RIDGE must be secured at all cost and with least possible delay.

The C.O.'s prior recce had revealed the general area of the enemy's posns and to that date no Aust tps had operated against him in that sector. It was therefore decided to make the approach march over ROOSEVELDT RIDGE, which was under observation of the enemy, under cover of night. This was carried out on the night of 30/31 AUG.

The attack itself was carried out up the precipitous slope of "D" Ridge by "D" Coy, in terms of Bn Operation Order No. 4. As the Bn was not allotted native carriers, our own tps had to act as carriers, calling for a maintenance Pl from another Coy to be attached to the attacking tps, and the remainder of the other Coy for general supply to the attacking Coy.

By the evening of 31 AUG "D" Coy had penetrated the enemy's defences at the junc of "D" and "E" ridges and secured a precarious foothold on the razor back named the "BAMBOOS" within 150 yds of the enemy's main line of defences on the crest of SCOUT RIDGE, were digging in and evacuating their casualties. C Coy less the Pl attached to "D" had moved up to a position 300 yds in rear and down the slope from "D" Coy, in support and to supply them. On the 1 SEPT, the enemy made three fierce attacks preceded by mortar and MMG fire, against "D" Coy, but each attack was repulsed and in turn a counter attack by 18 Pl of "D" Coy drove the enemy back into ~~to~~ his defended posts on the higher ground. As "D" Coy in the day's fighting had suffered rather heavy casualties for their already depleted strength and with all officers except the junior subaltern wounded, "C" Coy relieved them during the early night 1/2 SEPT, the depleted "D" Coy coming back into reserve, with "B" Coy moved forward to the position vacated by "C", in support of "C" at the "BAMBOOS."

On 2 SEPT, our arty completed its registration upon known enemy posns and were putting down concentrations with good effect. Our offensive action was continued by fighting patrols from "C" Coy, to locate the enemy's flanks and determine the depth of his defences. These patrols found that owing to the deep ravines north and south of our own and the enemy's posns, only close outflanking was possible always under small arms fire and within grenade range. It was also revealed that the enemy's posns attacked on 31 AUG and from which he in turn attacked on 1 SEPT, were on a false crest, the real crest and objective being another 200 yds to the rear and slightly higher still. By the night 2 SEPT, however, by the use of fire from all supporting weapons and vigorous fighting patrols the enemy were driven back to his main defences on the real crest, the false crest becoming no mans land, controlled by us with fire and patrols.



On 3 SEPT 43, whilst "C" Coy were fully occupied with the task of gaining their objective, henceforth known as the CREST, it had become apparent that enemy held posns in strength on "E" ridge which commanded and threatened the Bns right flank, and L of C to the fwd Coys. The eastern end of "E" ridge north of LOKANU village, dominated the remainder of "E" ridge, and also DOT INLET and our beachhead. It was therefore decided to take the eastern end of "E" ridge, known as the LOKANU feature or BYRNE'S OP. A Coy who had been patrolling to this feature were given the task. Reces had revealed that the enemy were inclined to vacate his posns on the forward slopes during our shelling. 7 Pl were therefore ordered to carry out a quiet unobserved approach under an arty concentration. This was carried out and as anticipated the enemy slipped over to the reverse slope during the shelling. When the Pl was but 100 yds from the crest of the feature and the arty fire had ceased, speed became essential to occupy the posns before the enemy regained them. However at this critical moment enemy guns opened fire on TAMBU BAY, and during our counter Bty fire many shells fell in the area occupied by the Pl. The Comd however held his ground on the fwd slopes under our own shelling which also kept the enemy on the reverse slope. He edged his Pl fwd and succeeded in occupying the enemy's posns on the crest, with only three light casualties, although his line to Bn had been cut in several places by our arty fire.

*Infantry  
McKook*  
A fighting patrol from "C" Coy in the meantime operating against SCOUT RIDGE, had succeeded in reaching the edge of the ledge which led to the CREST, but not without casualties. It was seen any frontal attack would be confined to a section front, with all approaches covered by enemy LMG's. The patrol managed to hold its posn long enough to allow a mortar F.O.O. to range his Mortar on to the enemy strong posts.

On 4 and 5 SEPT, "C" Coy at the BAMBOOS, and 7 Pl on the LOKANU feature, were both kept busy successfully repelling enemy counter attack on both posns, but not without suffering further casualties. On the 5 SEPT also "B" Coy had located an enemy strong post on E ridge, at 751964 called the PIMPLE, which threatened the rear of "C" Coy at the BAMBOOS. An attack by B Coy on the PIMPLE (vide OP Order No 5) was unsuccessful due to the razor back approach limiting the fwd tps to a three man front. Casualties were inflicted on the enemy, and our cas. were in this attack were 2 killed and 2 wounded.

On 6 SEPT, 7 Pl on the LOKANU feature repulsed their seventh attack on their posns, inflicting many casualties on the enemy but not without suffering further casualties themselves. The remainder of A Coy, were relieved of the responsibility of controlling the area between D and E ridges and were sent to reinforce 7 Pl on the LOKANU feature. D Coy took over the patrolling of the intermediate territory on "no mans land."

On the 7 and 8 SEPT our recce and fighting patrols had pushed further into the enemy posns on the CREST, PIMPLE and LOKANU feature, inflicting casualties, and softening up considerably, particularly with Arty and M. concentrations. By the night of 8 SEPT A Coy had captured the remainder of LOKANU feature, and driven the enemy back to posns on the lower slopes to the North and East.

At 1023 hrs 8 SEP, 6 Bostons effectively strafed enemy posns north of LOKANU and "E" Ridge from the sea to SCOUT RIDGE.



It had become apparent that a frontal attack by "C" Coy on the CREST would not succeed without very heavy casualties. Patrols on 7 and 8 SEPT had located an approach very wide around the enemy's right flank, by a steep ascent up a spur between the American, Jap and own posns, at 745959 to the top of the ridge, between two Jap perimeters.

It was decided to carry out a two pronged attack on the CREST, C Coy from the BAMBOOS, and D Coy by this outflanking route, from the enemy's right rear. This was carried out in terms of OP Order No 6 on 9 SEPT, both attacking forces being limited by confined approaches, to one Pl each.

The operation was controlled by L/T and zero set by the outflanking force comd when in posn. The attack was pressed from both front and rear preceded by a heavy arty and M. concentration. The enemy fired a green flare, withdrew, leaving his dead and dying, and much eqpt. Both forces met on the objective after only a minor skirmish with the last Japs to leave the posn, and the objective captured with our casualties 1 killed and 3 wounded. The remainder C Coy moved up from the BAMBOOS, consolidated and exploited to the N.E. B Coy moved fwd to the BAMBOOS vacated by C.

A coy in the meantime on 9 SEPT pressed their attack on the remaining enemy posn NE of LOKANU feature and succeeded in driving the enemy with heavy losses, back to the jungle below, whence they fled, leaving many dead and much eqpt.

B Coy moved down E Ridge East from the BAMBOOS and occupied the PIMPLE apparently vacated by the enemy when the flare was fired from the CREST. B Coy exploited right along E ridge without opposition.

Thus by night of 9 SEPT 43 the Bn had achieved all its tasks consolidated its gains (vide OP Order No 7) and the enemy were in full retreat. The American forces which were some 1200yds south of our posns, found the enemy retreating also and pushed fwd to effect a junc with our tps, but this was not achieved until 0830 hrs on 10 SEPT 43, when their fwd tps reached our posns on SCOUT RIDGE.

At first light on 10 SEPT C Coy moved NE along SCOUT RIDGE in hot pursuit of the fleeing enemy, and B Coy west to NUK NUK, to effect the junc with tps of 29 Bde. A and D Coys held their posns on LOKANU and the CREST respectively until by late evening they were relieved by American forces which had come up from the South.

This brought to a conclusion phase II, or the Attack and saw the commencement of the Pursuit.

Enemy casualties counted to date were 107 killed. Our casualties -

Died of wounds	1 Officer		
Killed in action		9 ORs	
Wounded " "	4 "	37 "	
Accid. wounded		6	= 5 Offrs 52 ORs.

III. The Pursuit - On 11 SEPT the Bn less C Coy on SCOUT RIDGE, had advanced across the precipitous SCOUT RIDGE west to NUK NUK (vide OP Order No 8) where they effected the junc with tps of 42 Bn, and reverted to comd of Hq 29 Bde. In the meantime C Coy occupied enemy perimeters on the heels of the enemy, taking occasional shots at their stragglers but met no serious opposition. By night 10 SEPT 43 C Coy were on the high ground overlooking the FRANCISCO River mouth, which they crossed into SALAMAUA at first light on 11 SEPT 43,



along the coastline to the Isthmus.

The pursuit continued and by night 12 SEPT the Bn had moved north through SALAMAUA and CHINATOWN, to a posn just south of MISSION POINT, against straggling Japs, killing 4 for the cost of one of our tps wounded.

On 13 SEPT 43 the Bn pushed on and split into two columns, A and C Coys under Comd Major Lack, took the inland route over the mountains from MALOLO and OLD WAMASA, north to junc 651082 (SALAMAUA - 1").

The Bn less A and C Coys pushed along the coast through BUSAMA to tk junc 659093. (vide OP Order No 9)

By nightfall the Bn less A and C Coys were in a firm base at their objective which they occupied with only light opposition. One of the tps was killed on the objective by a stray shot, although no enemy was actually observed.

A and C Coys, after an arduous advance through land mines and booby traps, which were lifted without casualties, and over wild and rugged country on only faint footpads reached a Knoll at 666056, and found evidence of very recent enemy occupation.

On 14 SEPT 43, in order to speed up the chase and get ahead of the retreating enemy, a force comprising B and D Coys less one Pl, under comd Major Jenyns <sup>embarked</sup> at BUSAMA and landed among the fleeing enemy south of SUGAR-LOAF - 6324 (WAGO - 1"). One Pl D Coy swept up the coast, crossed BUANG River and joined its company early next morning. On morning of 15 SEPT, the force occupied SUGARLOAF Knoll. On this operation 7 enemy were killed without loss to our tps.

At 1630 hrs on 14 SEPT C Coy from the inland route moved east to the coast and reached Bn, after pooling its few remaining emergency rations for A Coy to continue the task on the mountain route.

At first light on 15 SEPT A Coy, who had been without rations for 24 hrs, found their way to their objective a mile ahead, cut by a sheer drop of approx 100 ft, possibly caused by a landslide, and the Coy moved east to the coast and rejoined the Bn.

On the 16 SEPT remainder of the Bn less A Coy moved to SUGARLOAF. B Coy pushed fwd patrols to LABU Lagoon and fwd patrol entered LABU 3 - 6334 (WAGO - 1"). One sick Jap captured, who died during night.

To speed up the chase, and as news to hand indicated organised resistance had ceased in LAE, C Coy moved from vicinity SUGARLOAF at moonrise on night 16 SEPT and pushed a Pl and 1 Sec MMG's fwd to close with fire the mouth of LABU Lagoon and MARKHAM RIVER.

On 17 SEPT A Coy arrived at SUGARLOAF and the Bn, less D Coy, pushed on to form two firm bases at LABU 1 (6437 - NADZAB - 1") and LABU 3 (vide OP Order No 10). D Coy remained in an ambush posn about SUGARLOAF to catch enemy who might escape the ring placed by the Bn around the exit from LAE to the South.

IV. The Mopping Up - With the Bn now in a posn to hold any enemy attempting to escape from MARKHAM VALLEY or LAE and cut off stragglers from SALAMAUA, all that remained was to mop up any such enemy. The Bn was deployed in one large ambush covering all likely approaches and in addition patrols were pushed out north and west, to assist in mopping up and also to contact tps of 24 Bn in the area of MARKHAM PT. This contact was made on 20 SEPT 43.

At dawn on 18 SEPT C Coy in their commanding posn at LABU Lagoon observed a party of enemy at least thirty strong with eqpt and fully



armed, attempting to escape in collapsible folding boats. When fired on the enemy took to the shore and the jungle.

At 0510 hrs the enemy in an attempt to break out of the ring now closed around ~~him~~ them, attacked C Coy in force. Three attacks in all were made in the following hour all of which were repulsed. The third and last attack was followed after fire from LMG's and light Mortars, by a determined bayonet charge. The charge was stopped on our perimeter by our own fire and bayonets, with hand to hand fighting, with some enemy even in the weapon pits with our own men. After fierce and close fighting the enemy were driven off and fled into the jungle leaving 13 killed on our perimeter and 1 prisoner taken. Four more enemy dead were later found in the jungle. Our casualties were remarkably light with 1 killed and 2 wounded.

About 0900 hrs the same morning patrols from B Coy met the remnants of this force and attacked immediately, killing 9 for the cost of one minor wound to our tps.

On 19 SEPT a patrol from C north of LABU Lagoon along south bank of MARKHAM RIVER, contacted a party of 7 enemy, attacked and killed 6, without loss to our tps. One enemy escaped into the jungle.

From 20 SEPT, to date, 22 SEPT, patrols from all Coys have been active to the North and West, in sweeps and ambushes on all likely approaches and these revealed no further trace of enemy.

It would appear this last phase has therefore approached its conclusion.

In the mopping up phase, to date a further 44 enemy were killed, making the total known enemy killed in all, exclusive of those he removed or buried, 151, and 1 prisoner. With casualties sustained in these mopping up operations our total casualties for the full operation was -

Killed in action		11 ORs
Died of wounds	1 Offr	-
Wounded in action	4 "	39
Accidentally wounded		
(Own booby traps and G.S. wounds)		6


5 Offrs. 56 ORs = 61

SICK - P. U. O. 34 . DYSENTERY - 25 : 59 - 120

Many difficulties, particularly in the matter of supply, and evacuation of casualties arose but were overcome by various means, and the lessons learnt are most valuable.

Lessons from operations are attached, together with Medical and Supply Reports.

NOTE For completion of Mopping Up Phase, 22 - 30 SEP, see Part II written separately since.

  
Lt Col  
(J. L. AMIES)

Commanding 15 Aust Inf Bn



HISTORY OF OPERATIONS - SALAMAU - LAE CAMPAIGN - AUG/SEP 43

## PART II - Mopping up Phase - 22 - 30 SEP 43

(Vide Part I -1AUG - 22 SEP written separately)

Since completing the Bns History of Operations to the date all organised resistance had ceased in LAE and nearby areas, 15 Bn have been actively engaged in completing mopping up operations against enemy escaping from LAE and south of the MARKHAM RIVER.

By the afternoon of 22 SEP, patrols were operating deep into all areas, North and West of the general line LABU 1 - LABU LAGOON - SUGAR LOAF, each patrol extending over two to three days according to tasks in areas of responsibility.

At 1450 hrs natives reached D Coy at SUGARLOAF and informed O.C. D Coy a party of many Japs, between 40 and 50 as far as could be substantiated were at a village 3 hrs West of the Coy, on map ref approx 582282.

At this time one strong patrol under Lieut McCullough was already in vicinity moving N to MARKHAM PT, but as later reported was some miles north of village when Japs arrived there.

An ambush was set by D Coy en track from village towards Coy posn, and was in posn by nightfall 22 SEP 43.

At first light 23 SEP, additional patrols were moved to intercept the enemy, from the North, south west along INAGARI CK under comd Lieut HOPKINS and another later Lieut TEWKSBURY, and another west from SUGARLOAF under Comd LIEUT OXLEY around the ambush, north of the village. Owing to thick jungle, and deep swamps progress of both patrols was slow, and took until the following afternoon to reach the general area.

In the meantime in the afternoon McCULLOUGH'S patrol had returned from its three day trip to north and were immediately diverted to approach village from south.

At 1505 hrs<sup>24 SEP</sup> the three patrols, TEWKSBURY, OXLEYS and McCULLOUGH'S, called northern, central and southern respectively had reached posns around village in thick jungle, with visibility 6 feet. A fire fight followed in which enemy were heard screaming and then retreated west. Enemy casualties were not counted as patrol did not stop to search jungle, but continued to trail retreating Japs.

The central patrol were 20 mins from scene of action, and swung West to intercept the enemy. The northern patrol had not reached area, being held up in thick swamps waist deep.

At first light on 25 SEP, the southern patrol were recalled, leaving the central patrol who were much fresher and held a further two days rations, to continue the chase of the enemy into the hills to the west and south.

A fresh patrol on same day was sent south along coast to BUANG Rv and prepared an ambush at river crossing 592226 and patrol BUANG RIVER to coast, in case the enemy should succeed in evading contact with the central patrol and cross SUGARLOAF Range to the south. No contact was made by either patrols on 25 SEP. During the 26 SEP, the chase continued, the central patrol tracking the enemy in dense jungle up slopes one in three, to 598255 where a freshly torn Jap photograph was found. At 600258 tracks all leading south, south east and south west indicated enemy had split into small groups and just "gone bush". A rifle and Officer's sword in good condition were recovered en route. As with both the northern and southern forces, no contact occurred again this day.

During the 27 SEP, the northern and central patrols who had covered the area of their task and exhausted their rations, and returned to the base at SUGARLOAF, after the central force had failed to catch the enemy and reached the crest of SUGARLOAF range, to see only faint signs of enemy some hours ahead, still bearingsouth east to south west.

The southern patrol and ambush along the BUANG RIVER remained active and established a second ambush at 589227 and sent a recon patrol



forward to investigate a native report of Americans at KALETETA, 5422, who were suspected by patrol to be Japs. No sign of either Americans or Japs were found, but tracks resembling Australian bootprints a week or so old were seen - possibly the tracks of 24 Bn tps who had passed that way about a week previously.

On the morning of the 28 SEP, all reports to hand from patrols and reliable natives indicated the enemy, working in small groups and reduced in numbers reliably calculated at 39, had succeeded in evading the ring our tps had made around him and were somewhere south of SUGAR LOAF RANGE. As it could not be guaranteed that the southern patrol along BUANG RIVER could locate and prevent enemy crossing the long line of the river, 9 Pl of A Coy were embarked by barge at LABU 3 at 1315 hrs and sent to land at BUSAMA 680092, check the village, interrogate all natives seen, and sweep north up the coast to the BUANG RIVER in an endeavour to intercept the and destroy the enemy should he succeed in passing through the ambushes and patrols along the river.

From BUSAMA, 9 Pl known as SKEENS patrol moved north along coast. When they were between the BWUSSI River and BUANG River, not having seen signs of the enemy, a native police boy caught them with the information his boys had found enemy tracks leading to enemy 50 strong with 2 LMGs forty mins west up BWUSSI River. SKEENS patrol sent the infm to the standing patrol on the BUANG River and to the remainder of HUNT FORCE at SUGAR LOAF, and returned to cover the track leading west up the BWUSSI.

HUNT FORCE were then ordered to move to BWUSSI River, leaving one Sec at SUGARLOAF, and one at BUANG River crossing. A ration barge was diverted to SUGARLOAF and picked up the greater portion of HUNT FORCE and landed ~~him~~ them south of BWUSSI River.

At BWUSSI River SKEENS and McCULLOUGH'S patrols joined HUNT Force which moved WEST along the line of the River without making contact. By last light the force had manoeuvred to surround the HUTS area on the river.

At first light 30 SEP the force closed in to attack but found no enemy, and signs that three only had ever been in the area.

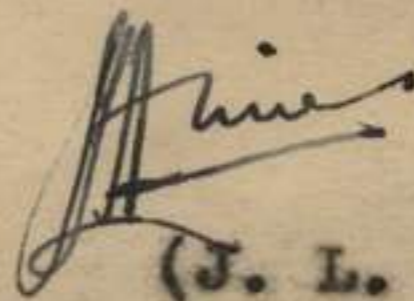
The force patrolled the area and moved back to coast without seeing any further signs. Here Major Kelly of the Lt A.A. Bty at SALAMAUA, who had a patrol in vicinity and had heard similar reports, and come fwd to investigate. The Lieut Cox of MNGAU based at BUSAMA was contacted. He was of the opinion from native reports, that the enemy were inland along the GWACO River, not the BWUSSI River, and the natives name these rivers opposite to that shown on map. In addition it was found that his police boys had the infm of the enemy from kanakas and had not seen the enemy in person as first reported.

Tps of "A" Coy incl in HUNT FORCE, under Comd Lieut Oxley were then ordered to move to BUSAMA, base there, take under Comd a Pl of P.I.B. which arrived in area at 1800 hrs, to locate and destroy any enemy found.

The remainder of HUNT FORCE were ordered back to SUGAR LOAF, with B Coy tps to rejoin their Coy from there.

Thus operations to 30 SEP 43 have concluded and it should be but a matter of time before the remnants of the enemy, if any, are located and destroyed.

The chase has been hard and continuous, and will be continued in the same manner until it is definitely established all enemy have been accounted for.



Lt Col

(J. L. AMIES)

Commanding 15 Aust Inf Bn

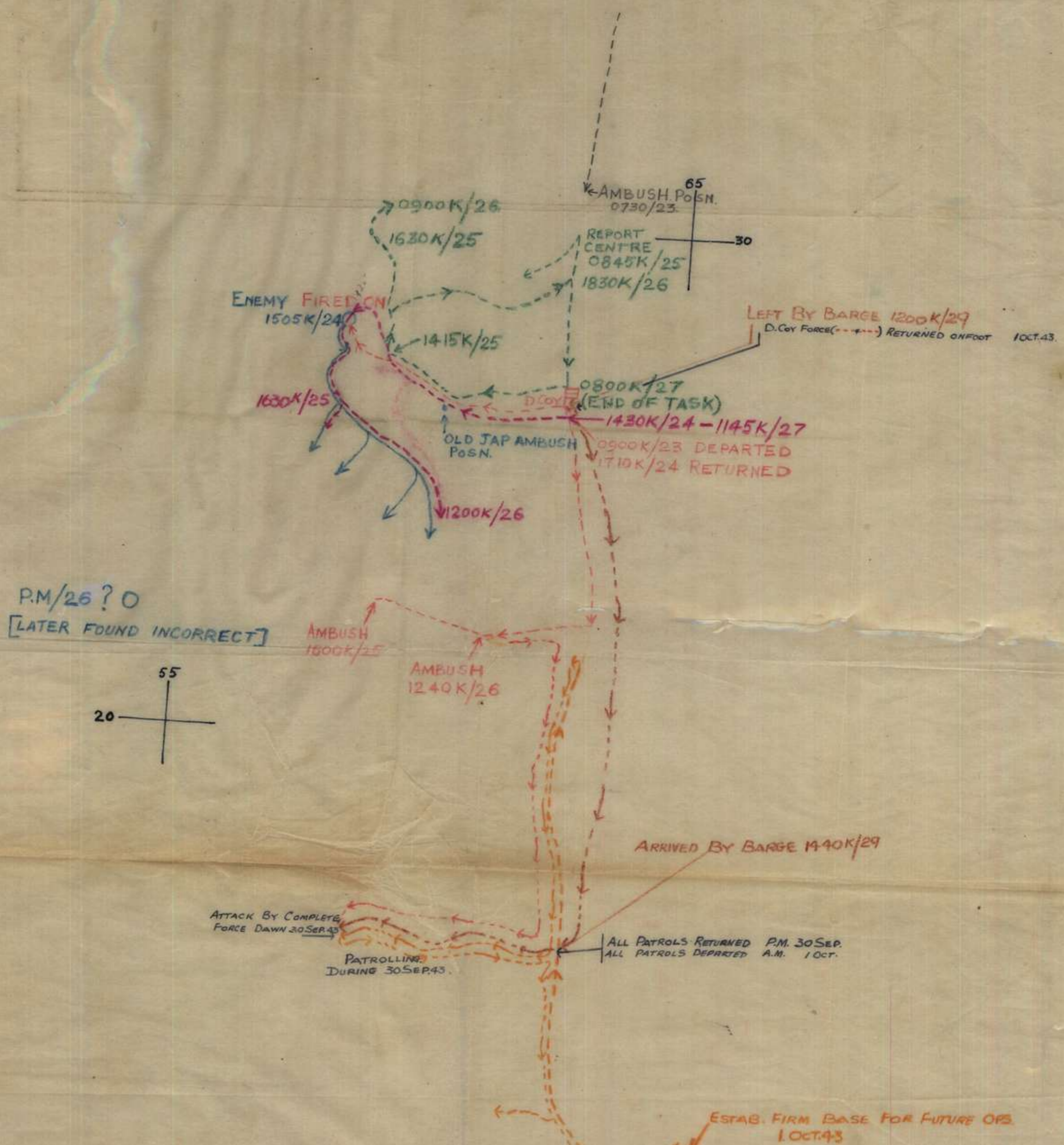


— 15AUST. INF. BN. —

— TRACING SHOWING MOPPING UP OPERATIONS. —

— BY "HUNT FORCE" 23SEP-30SEP43. —

REF. MAP: WAGO. PROV. 1" to 1mile.



— LEGEND —

LIEUT. MCGULLOUGH	---
" TEWKSBURY	---
" OXLEY	---
" SKEEN	---
" HOPKINS	---
CAPT. PROVAN.	---

Prepared by: I Section, 15. AI. Bn.  
 Under Instns From: I.O.  
 Date: 28 Sep. 43.





SALAMAUA.

PURSUIT  
PHASE

ATTACK  
PHASE

BN-C

CREST

BAMBOOS

BO

6

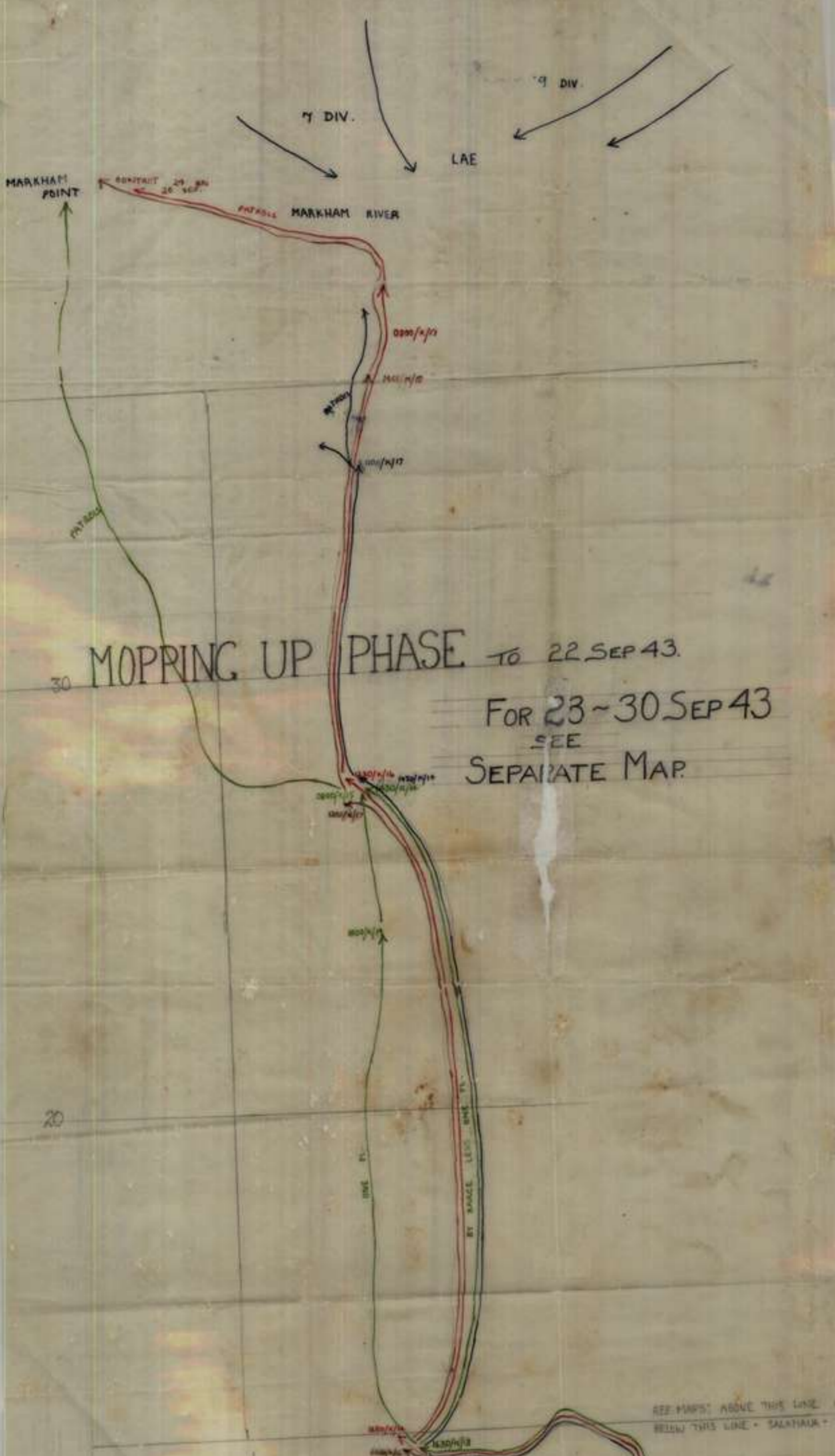
206 BB sal Area 26 July 43-0900/H 12" 7000 89/3 1-26

EASTMAN TOPOGRAPHIC SAFETY

EASTMAN TOPOGRAPHIC SAFETY

EASTMAN TO





Lae-Salamaua Campaign

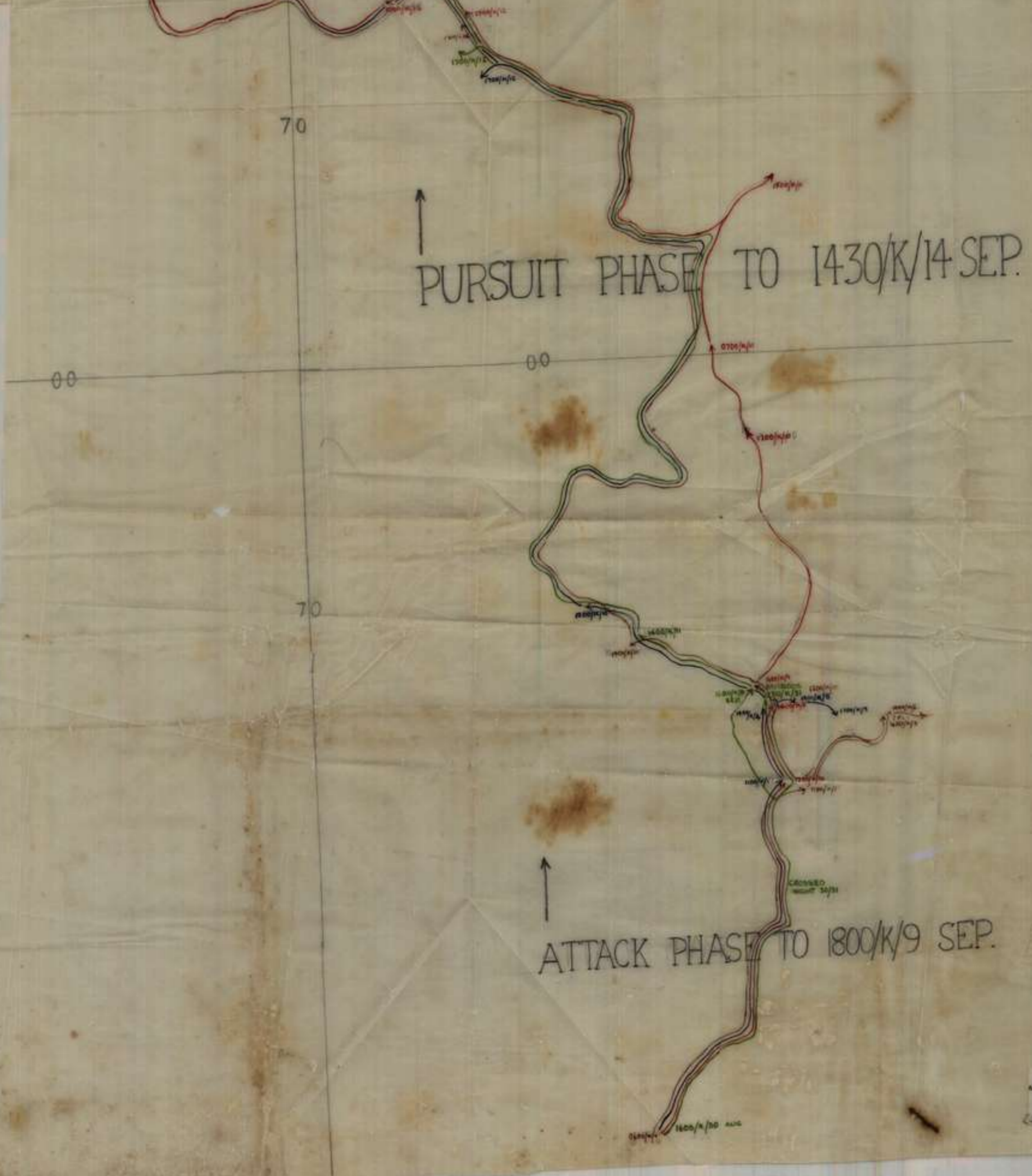
15 AUST. INF. BN.

HISTORY of OPERATIONS

30 AUG. - 18 SEP. - 1943

Legend

- A COY. →
- B COY. →
- C COY. →
- D COY. →



AWM 52  
Class 2254  
August - September 1943  
Operations Map  
number 60  
CARTON - 104



LESSONS FROM OPERATIONS SALAMAUVA - LAE CAMPAIGN AUG - SEPT 43 *not*1. Intelligence

A. Whilst the collation of essential info is no more important in jungle warfare than any other, added facilities are necessary to overcome the blind observation particular to the jungle. Far more value than ever has been had to be attached to fwd tps individually, and also to the use of aerial photographs. Still more training is needed in individual observation and deduction, and to the study and reading of aerial photographs.

B. INT. Personnel -

Allotment of duties - It was found that a larger number of I Sec personnel are required at Command Post than originally laid down. Most workable allotment has been as follows -

- Sgt to supervise
- 1 Cpl on phone and current diary
- 1 OR action diary and patrol reports
- 1 OR sit map and additional maps and sketches
- 1 OR war diary and help with maps
- 2 ORs as guides and relief of duties
- 1 OR available for OP work

This leaves one Cpl and one OR for fwd Coys. The Cpl to base between the fwd Coys, collecting information. The OR attached to Coy in contact, or for other special tasks.

C. Map Corrections - As maps were proved unreliable in many ways, too much stress cannot be laid upon the need for Arty Offrs, Coy Comds and patrol leaders to forward amendments found necessary to the map as issued. The Arty O.P.O. is one of the best men to assist in the corrections of maps.

2. Command - Battle HQ must be well fwd, and at times even a temporary C.P. established ahead of the Battle HQ to co-ordinate and control a particular tricky or hazardous operation. If more than one operation is in progress at the same time, the C.O. must remain at Battle HQ and the tactical 2 i/c at the fwd C.P. At other times when only one operation is in progress C.O. is best fwd at the C.P. or with the two fwd Coys.

A careful allotment of duties between Bn 2 i/c and tactical 2 i/c, speeds up action, support, and supply and saves duplication. Such duties must be carefully outlined before the operation commences.

Tactics - (a) Enemy - in defence - As we maintain<sup>ED</sup> the offensive throughout the enemy was principally on the defence although he lost no opportunity to counter-attack when we threatened or captured his posns. For his defence he had the advantage of the higher ground and sited well constructed posts naturally camouflaged at the end of each razor back that led into his posns. In three separate attacks these tactics limited our fwd tps to nothing more at the most than one section and making a normal outflanking movg impossible. As usual he displayed good fire discipline and on one occasion fwd tps reached within 5 yds of his well concealed post before they were fired upon.

On SCOUT RIDGE he resorted to his old tricks of snipers in tree tops on the flanks and had one IMG located in the tree tops firing down into our posn.



- (b) In attack - The enemy preceded all his attacks by heavy mortar concentration, keeping his mtn gun heavily mainly for harassing fire. His mortars were very accurate and could not be disregarded. On two occasions prior to his attack, under cover of pre-dawn or early dusk, he sent tps fwd to delouse our booby traps, but did not succeed to any marked extent. Although he would press his attacks he was broken on every occasion by well aimed and controlled fire. When the attack failed, particularly if under our arty defensive fire, he fled in disorder. In one of our last engagements the enemy attacked with a most determined bayonet charge which however did not succeed.
- (c) General - No new tricks to deceive our tps other than those already known were reported.

#### 4. Tactics - Own Tps-

- (a) Attack - The approach and contact was carried out in accordance with the normal drill of jungle warfare as practised by the Bn for the past eight months. As most of our attacks however were by necessity up steep razor backs, the normal fixing and out-flanking was seldom possible, except in the patrol clashes during the mopping up phase near LAE. During the attack phase against the SALAMAUA defences a variation from the normal drill became necessary. After several determined attacks with tps preceded by concentrations which proved costly in casualties it was found that a great deal more "softening up" than normal was required. This process was combined with continual harassing by fighting patrols and fire on his L of C, but when it was considered that the enemy had been sufficiently shaken and harassed attacks were again launched and when attacked from two directions at once, with the previous softening up, he quickly crumpled.

Supporting Fire - After their first attack with supporting fire tps learned the value of moving in close behind our arty and mortars and to disregard any enemy small arms fire in the early stages. A liberal use of grenades in the assault also proved effective.

- (b) In defence - As most of our posns gained were occupied under fire, the development of perimeters was a risky business but tps learnt to take the risk to ensure an all round dug in perimeter was complete by night. In addition they also learnt the value of the clearing of fields of fire.

The tendency to form too tight a perimeter at night must be avoided and no more than two men should be in each pit and no pit closer to another than say 3 yds. This is necessary to avoid casualties from enemy mortars which are very effective. On the other hand too loose a perimeter will prove dangerous.

Observing the effect of our arty defensive fire on the enemy and its accuracy, our tps soon learnt to keep their perimeter fully manned with heads up, and weapons firing even though our arty was falling within 150 yds.

- (c) Booby Traps - The intelligent use of booby traps in dead ground and covered approaches proved most effective but Coys must realise the need when leaving their posns and advancing, for all such booby traps to be lifted, to prevent casualties in another of our Coys occupying their old area. If time before the advance does



not permit of booby traps being lifted, one or two men must be left behind to do this or guide the new Coy clear of the traps.

- (d) Snipers - Advantage was taken of tall trees and hill top posns to place out our snipers who very soon out-sniped the enemy but snipers on the LOKANU feature particularly so harassed the track to the enemy posns that they soon made it fatal for the enemy to use it.
- (e) Patrols - Perhaps two thirds of our offensive action was by necessity confined to fighting patrols apart from numerous small recce patrols. On two occasions recce in force was necessary and brought excellent results.

Patrols particularly on the flat NORTH of SALAMAUA learnt the value of their contact and outflanking drill and soon learnt it paid them much better to take the fight upon contact right into the enemy and retain the initiative. An intelligent use of fwd automatic weapons mixed with numbers of grenades proved most effective. When reconnoitring in close contact, tps quickly learnt the value of a covering gp of the patrol to extricate the scouts upon completion of their recce, usually carried out under fire.

#### 5. Equipment -

- (a) Whilst the soldiers jungle kit contains only the essentials in clothing, rations, medical and health requisites, it was found necessary on the majority of occasions to strip down to nothing but rations and amn and water, particularly when attacking up very steep slopes. This called for supply and maintenance tps to follow the attacking tps, particularly as in the early ops the Bn had no native carrier train. This proved very tiring to the reserve Coy and then the attacking tps who were forced to change roles without any let up during the campaign.
- (b) Basic pouches on many occasions proved a nuisance particularly on close patrols, tps preferring to move out equipped with only their weapons and bandolier of amn or magazines in pockets. Tin hats by common consent were dumped at B Ech, prior to moving into action.
- (c) The tps find the felt hat far cooler, lighter and more comfortable and the lack of the tin hat when under fire had no ill effects whatever. As recommended by other units in previous campaigns better than a felt hat in jungle fighting, is some form of beret. As chin straps irritate in humid climates the felt hat is easily knocked off and lost in the jungle, particularly when in close fighting. The beret also has the added advantage of giving men a clearer vision which is somewhat obscured by the Brim of the hat.
- (d) Tools - The standard issue pick and shovel is not only more than what is reqd for digging in under most jungle conditions, but is a burden to advancing tps. due to their bulk and weight. Digging tools are essential however and some form of smaller pick and shovel is necessary; tps lost no opportunity to recover abandoned American and Japanese small picks and spades and it is strongly recommended that similar eqpt be issued to infantry in place of our present eqpt.

- 6. Amn. - The amn carried by the man during an advance and assault needs careful consideration on each separate occasion and again for the occupation of a posn when occupied. The standard Scale A as modified by 17 Bde appeared to be a good average. For particular tasks, the amount of amn for Bren and Owen Guns and the number of grenades carried had to be increased. It is considered too risky to adopt a set scale for all occasions.



Weapons - All weapons were proved to be most effective, particularly the E.Y. rifle and 7 second grenades. Contrary to expectations, much use of the 2" mortar was made with excellent results. This was no doubt helped by the terrain where it was possible to use the mortar from one feature to another. In flat thick jungle the EY rifle is more satisfactory, as the grenade unlike the mortar bomb will not explode if it hits an intermediate tree. The Austen Gun whilst a handy weapon proved unpopular in some quarters due to the magazine being very hard to fill.

Of the lighter weapons the grenade proved the most popular and in many instances the most effective. Tps will not now move anywhere without at least two grenades.

Of the heavier weapons the 3" mortar did the greatest damage although the MMG's proved their worth on two occasions. For the mortar Pl, unless sufficient native carriers can be guaranteed for any operation and in view of the carrying problem without natives, it is suggested that the mortar Pl be equipped with 4 3" mortars, providing at least one in support of each Coy, or an effective battery of four, and the remaining dets equipped with 2" mortar each. This is considered to have two advantages, firstly it would provide relief carriers and crews for the four mortars, particularly when natives are not available. Secondly, when the four 3" mortars have been put into action, if additional support is reqd in any Coy, <sup>THERE</sup> ~~if~~ it is an extra 2" mortar available for the Coy, or it could be operated separately by the mortar Pl itself.

8. Rations - Are dealt with more fully in report attd by Q.M. Generally speaking however there was an insufficient quantity of sugar, salt tablets and canned heat available.

As the tps were forced to operate on mtn tops, water supply became serious, particularly with few if any native carriers to help.

With water rationed, bully beef was found too dry and M and V preferred. The lack of canned heat combined with the impossibility of fires with the fwd Coys caused tps to go without hot meals or drinks for the greater part of the campaign.

9. Medical - This & is dealt with fully in the RMO's report attd. Generally speaking owing to the Bns role, getting medical stores fwd was a problem and at one stage the Bn was 16 days without replenishment. The value of an individual, or at the least a section medical kit was proved, and tps learnt never to move without a fd dressing.

During the attack phase it was found necessary to establish a subsidiary RAP well fwd, as the Bn was committed on two separate fronts. Also the fwd RAP ensured a far more comfortable journey for the wounded from their Coy down the rugged slopes to the main RAP, and the line of evacuation. According to the operation in progress on a particular front, the RMO worked at the medical post nearest the action.

10. Communications - Combined with supply and medical, communications proved a greater problem than the tactical problem. No Pl worked harder than the Sig Pl yet at times conn was not established till fairly late in an operation. This was due to two points; the first, the general supply problem of getting sufficient cable fwd to keep up with outflanking movts during the attack phase and with the advance, during the pursuit. Secondly, when extra cable was made available, it was more often than not heavy cable on terrific reels at least 4 man loads. It is considered that sig cable for infantry should be much lighter such as the American twisted assault cable and reels no more than a



1 man load.

Number 108 wireless sets were not tried owing to their failure repeatedly during trg.

Visual by lamp when safe from enemy observation was used with success on occasions and in the ops against the LOKANU feature, when cable was repeatedly cut by enemy shell and mortar fire, a submarine cable of the ordinary D 3 cable, laid across DOT INLET proved to be most effective in maintaining communications.

Flare signals although arranged for in an emergency, were never used.

11. Points for Future Trg - The campaign has brought the need for further trg in -

- (i) Individual observation deduction and reporting.
- (ii) Study of aerial photographs by all officers and even certain N.C.O's.
- (iii) A quicker drill for the establishment and movt of HQ when moving rapidly such as a long pursuit.
- (iv) More practice in moving quietly through the jungle, particularly in the placing of the feet on the ground when very close to the enemy.
- (v) Moving closer still behind our own arty in an attack and to cut the time between the end of the supporting fire and the assault.
- (vi) Particular care in the handling of the OSMG which when carelessly handled ~~is~~ is so prone to fire when bumped even when on safe.
- (vii) Practice in the detection of ambushes such as suspicious logs, bushes etc, on tracks.
- (viii) Fire discipline within sections.
- (ix) The setting and delousing of booby traps.
- (x) At least one man in every section to be highly trained in aid.



Lt Col

(J. L. AMIES)

Commanding 15 Aust Inf Bn

end



15 AUST INF BN

Q.M.'s REPORT

on

Supplies - BALAMAU - LAE OPERATION AUG/SEPT 43

1. The most important lesson learned is that time is required for building Reserve Supply Dumps along the L of C to maintain and Supply forward Coys at short notice, particularly when the advance is a forced march in pursuit of fleeing enemy. To offset the time factor additional native carriers are required to keep the supplies forward.
2. Where native labour is employed it is important that the cargo is kept to one man loads, the ideal weight being 35 lbs. The native will carry this weight happily and will do two trips where he will do only one if overloaded.
3. Rations were good throughout the operation but there was a marked deficiency of Canned Heat. Larger quantities of this commodity are required for tps in contact, to whom it is not possible to send hot food. Salt tablets are also required in larger quantities than supplied.
4. The ideal beverage was found to be Cocoa, powdered Milk and sugar, mixed dry. This can be easily carried and the water need only be warmed, not boiled as for tea. This can be done under any conditions with a saving in the quantity of canned heat otherwise required.
5. Sugar was extremely short of that required by tps, particularly during forced marches.
6. With rations, M and V proved more desirable than Bully Beef which was found to be too dry for tps fighting away from water and limited to one water bottle per day for all purposes.
7. Considering the problems the Bn had to face in the attack phase when it operated without its usual Ede supply line, and particularly during the pursuit phase when supplies were always behind the advancing tps, who moved faster than might be considered normal in jungle warfare, and the rate at which supplies can be despatched by carriers, it is considered fortunate that only one Coy suffered slightly from lack of provisions, for 24 hrs.
8. Amn, and replacement of essential war eqpt never failed to reach fwd tps even at the expense of priority over rations with the carrier line.
9. Medical stores were not as plentiful as desired but this is covered in a separate report by RMO.

Capt

(L. J. BEIRNE)

Q.M. 15 Aust Inf Bn



HQ 15 Aust Inf Bn  
AUSTRALIA  
23 SEPT 43

Subject: EVACUATIONS DURING OPS

29 Aust Inf Bde

1. It will be noted in Appendix "A" to the Medical Officer's report attached to Lessons from Ops, that of the PUO evacuations during ops, 50% came from the one Coy, A Coy.

This Coy is one of the best disciplined Coys in the Bn and up to the time of leaving MILNE BAY had the lowest figures for evacuations for 7 months.

2. A close investigation has been made to ascertain why their figures should have been so high. The following is both the Medical Offrs and my own conclusion:-

"A coy was the last Coy to leave MOROBE where they remained until relieved by the 2/1 MG. Bn. 80% of their time there was spent on night shifts in unloading petrol and ammunition into the mangroves on the West side of the harbour."

3. Immediately they were relieved of these duties they moved to NASSAU BAY. The next day they marched to TAMBU BAY, crossed ROOSEVELDT Ridge the following day and moved straight into action and have had NOT one days respite since, until yesterday. They also were a Coy that did the journey of three days through the mountains from CHINATOWN to BUSAMA on one days SWPA and one days emergency rations, which no doubt lowered their resistance somewhat.

4. From my investigation I am satisfied anti-malaria precautions have NOT been relaxed, bearing in mind the tactical situation from time to time.



Lt Col

(J. L. AMIES)

Commanding 15 Aust Inf Bn.



MEDICAL REPORT ON OPERATIONS

From a medical point of view the recent ops are best divided into four separate phases.

Phase I. - Concentration of Bn at TAMBU BAY

RAP was established and eqpt and supplies received. Some eqpt, notably Thomas Splints, which did not arrive from NASSAU BAY was replaced and supplies replenished.

Phase II. - DOT INLET 31 AUG to 10 SEPT

On 31 AUG 43, the fwd RAP moved with advanced BHQ to DOT INLET. 2 native carriers carried supplies. Battle casualties were received almost immediately via an extremely difficult track down D Ridge from D Coy. Stretcher cases took several hrs to reach the RAP. The remainder of RAP personnel and stores were brought fwd during the next few days.

On 4 SEPT fwd RAP moved half way up D Ridge. Casualties were then seen by RMO very early, and before the most difficult part of the carry down D Ridge. This, together with the employment of native carriers on D ridge and improvements to the track resulted in extremely satisfactory treatment of casualties.

Casualties from A Coy on LOKANU KNOLL were evacuated direct to main RAP at Bn HQ.

A very good hut was built for the main RAP, and up to 8 cases of mild sickness accommodated under a tent fly.

Evacuation beyond RAP - Casualties were evacuated in the daytime by native carriers and at night by barge to 7 Aust Fd Amb MDS at TAMBU BAY. This was for the most part very satisfactory, but in a few cases some delay occurred due to late arrival of barges.

Phase III - 11 SEPT to 19 SEPT

In this phase movt was extremely rapid, and native carrier trains were not able to keep up supplies. For 4 days the RAP eqpt was limited to that carried by the RAP personnel.

Evacuation - Evacuation of casualties in this phase was not satisfactory. The only battle casualty during this period had to be held all night, due to non arrival of an expected barge.

Phase IV - Mopping up - SEPT 20

RAP established in church at LABU TALI - an excellent building where patients are comfortably housed during treatment or while awaiting evacuation.

Casualties evacuated from Coys to RAP by track or by barge when available.

Evacuation from RAP

Entirely by barge, and NOT satisfactory due to infrequency and irregularity of barges. In one instance patients could not be evacuated for 2 days.

Health during Operations -

While concentrating at TAMBU BAY the incidence of PUO was fairly high. During the DOT INLET phase cases averaged 2 per day. Thereafter the incidence decreased rapidly, so that during Phase III and IV the average had fallen to one case per day.

One half of the cases of PUO evacuated during these ops were from A Coy. A Coy remained in MOROBE for 6 days after the remainder of the Bn and spent several days moving by barge and on foot immediately before ops commenced. It would appear that lowering of resistance by severe physical exertion, exposure to the weather, and lack of an adequate well balanced diet and at times shortage of rations with tps going without a meal may



have been a considerable factor in the causation of this high incidence of PUO. The Bn has also been throughout ~~in~~ the coastal area.

The incidence of Dysentery has also been high, in spite of strict water discipline and hygiene measures. The majority of evacuations from this cause would not have been necessary had adequate supplies of sulphaguanidine been available for treatment.

Analysis of evacuation is attached as Appendix A.

Medical Personnel -

Strength on arrival in TAMBU BAY - 1 Offr, 2 NCO's and 1 OR AAMC att'd, 2 NCO's and 12 OR's Regimental stretcher bearers, 4 Coy medical orderlies. Of these 1 accidentally wounded and 3 sick were evacuated while in TAMBU BAY, 1 killed, 1 wounded and 2 evacuated sick during ops.

Q31503 Pte Sallaway E. L., R.S.B. attached to D Coy, displayed high courage and devotion to duty. He was wounded in action on 2 SEPT.

Medical Supplies -

While at DOT INLET Medical supplies were satisfactory. Thereafter until the end of the period under consideration NO further medical supplies could be obtained, mainly because of lack of transport facilities.

Capt

(P. L. McNEIL)

R.M.O. 15 Aust Inf Bn



Appendix "A"

Analysis of Evacuations

I by Phases.

	<u>Battle Cas</u>	<u>Accid Wounded</u>	<u>PUO</u>	<u>Dysen- tery</u>	<u>Total sick</u>	<u>Total Evac.</u>
Dot Inlet AUG 30 to SEPT 10 - 11 days	44	5	23	20	43	92
Pursuit & Mopping up Phase SEP 11-21 - 10dys	2	1	11	5	16	19
Total 21 dys	46	6	34	25	59	111

<u>Coy</u>	<u>B.C.</u>	<u>Accid Wounded</u>	<u>Total Wounded</u>	<u>PUO</u>	<u>Dysentery</u>	<u>Total Sick</u>	<u>Total Evac.</u>
A	6	2	8	16	6	22	30
B	3	1	4	5	4	9	13
C	13	1	14	8	7	15	29
D	23	2	25	2	3	5	30
HQ	1	-	1	3	5	8	9
Bn HQ	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>25</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>111</b>

The majority of Battle Casualties suffered Bomb Wounds, and the remainder Gunshot Wounds.



HISTORY OF OPERATIONS

Hq 15 Aust Inf Bn  
AUSTRALIA  
25 SEPT 43

29 Aust Inf Bde

1. Herewith total amm expended during the attack, pursuit and mopping up phases of the SALAMAUA - LAE operations.

<u>.303</u> Rifle LMG & MMG	<u>.303</u> Strip Belt MMG	H.E. 36 4 Sec	H.E. 36 7 Sec	H.E. 69	3" Mor H.E.	3" Mor Smoke	2" Mor H.E.	2" Mor Smoke	9 m.m.	.380
26504	2500	1346	316	-	465	103	1124	207	30765	44

  
Lt Col  
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