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The operations of the 26th Cavalry (PS), by Lt Col T.J.H. Trapnell, Cav. Command and Staff College. 1946-47.

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COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS.

SCHOOL OF COMBINED ARMS

REGULAR COURSE

1946 - 1947

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 26TH CAVALRY (P.S.)

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SQUADRON COMMANDER

TYPE OF OPERATION DESCRIBED - DELAYING ACTION

LT. COL. T. J. H. TRAPNELL,

CAVALRY.

THE OPERATIONS OF THE 26TH CAVALRY

PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SQUADRON COMMANDER

TYPE OF OPERATION DESCRIBED - DELAYING ACTION

In the last war almost without exception the experience of our troops was in very successful offensive action. However, in the next war it may well be that we will initially and many times in many parts of the globe be forced into delaying action. Alaska, Japan, China, Europe may see the reverse of the type of operation that we were so fortunate to have had recently, at least at some stage of the hostilities. And it is astonishing what a greatly inferior force can accomplish if determined and skillfully maneuvered.

The purpose of this monograph is to cover the operations of the 26th Cavalry (P.S.) in delaying action from Lingayen to Bataan. Incidental was probably the last mounted regiment in the battlefield.

You all are undoubtedly familiar with the topography of Luzon, but I'll hastily describe it to refresh your memories.

* *

Corregidor defended Manila Bay from the sea, but the key to Corregidor was Bataan. If Bataan was held by an enemy force Corregidor would soon be untenable.

All planning for defense of the Philippine Islands prior to the war was based on the premise that the Japanese would land on Lingayen and attack down the great central plain with Manila as their objective, and reduce Corregidor from the rear and flank. For many years maneuvers wer-

held according to WPO3, which provided for delaying action against the invading force, from Lingayen and elements landed on Tayabas Bay, gradually withdrawing into Bataan, where they were supposed to hold out for six months. This was when the Philippine Div., 26th Cav. and a couple of C. A. regiments comprised the regular army troops in the Philippines.

When MacArthur took over after having organized the Philippine Army, WPO3 was discarded and the plan was to defend on the beaches. Nine divisions of the P. A. were on Luzon when the shooting started.

* *

The 26th Cavalry (P.S.) was a Philippine Scout Regiment, as indicated by the (PS) in its official designation, with home station at Fort Stotsenburg, Pampanga, about 60 miles north of Manila, and, with certain detachments, the regiment was there when the long expected blow fell on 8 December 1941. Troop F was stationed at Nichols Field and small detachments were on outpost duty at Baler and Dingalen Bays on the east coast of Luzon.

At 12:35, 8 December, as all the world knows, Clark Field was bombed and the best of our heavy bombers were destroyed. The Japs devoted most of their attention to Clark Field and the few planes that attacked adjacent Fort Stotsenburg did little damage.

On Dec. 9 the somewhat confused situation began to clarify. Further news of Pearl Harbor was received and rumors of enemy landings in Northern Luzon were investigated and found to be without foundation so far. News

of hostile carrier-based air attacks on Nichols Field and Iba Field made it soon apparent that our small air force had been wiped out in the first attack.

General Wainwright directed that the 26th Cav. would constitute a mobile reserve for the North Luzon force and would remain in the vicinity of Fort Stotsenburg in close contact with his Hq. until further notice.

On 12 Dec. word was received that the first hostile landing had been made at Apparri on the northern tip of Luzon.

On Dec. 13 news was received that another landing had been made at Vigan in strength. On 14 Dec. Gen. Wainwright moved his Hq. to Bam Ban and the 26th was moved to that area as Force Reserve. The regiment remained here through the 15th and 16th while events moved with considerable rapidity in the north. The hostile landing at Vigan was found to be so strong that our green Philippine Army Troops were unable to cope with it. The 26th was ordered to move north to Rosales on the Agno River, in order to be in a better position to launch a counter attack at any break-through in the North Luzon Force line from the southern arm of Lingayen Gulf to Vigan.

On 20 Dec. orders were received to send one troop dismounted, by truck to Bontoc, Mountain Province, with the mission of covering the road through Cervantes from the Japanese-held western coastal plain, and to prevent the enemy from using that road to attack Baguio from the rear.

By 21 Dec. the Japanese had expanded their beachhead at Vigan and brushed aside our Philippine Army forces in that area. General Wainwri

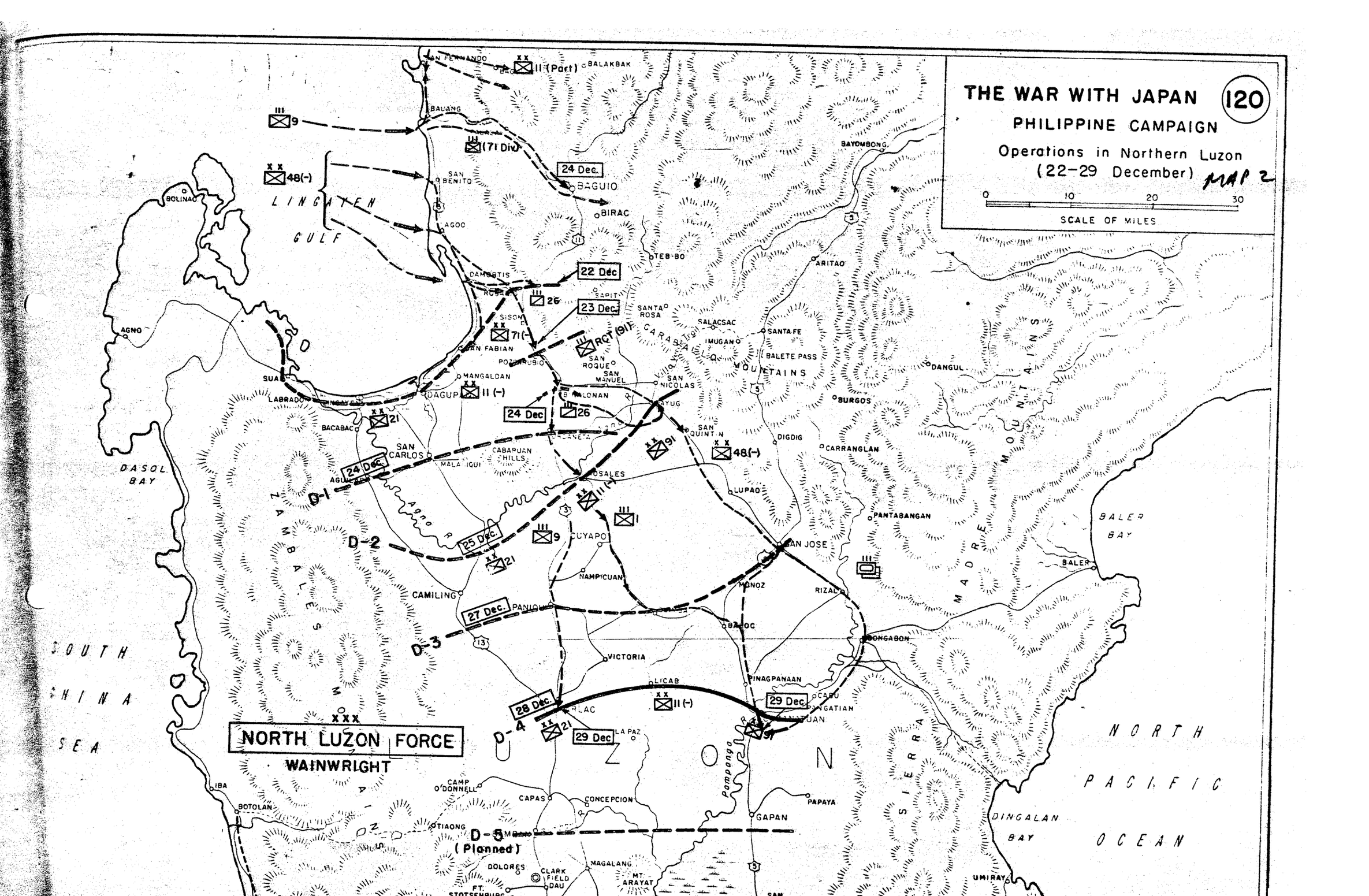
planned a swift counter-attack up the narrow coastal plain and ordered the 26th Cav. north to Rosario to participate in the attack.

The regiment moved out at 1500, 22 Dec. en route to Rosario. (MAP 2) The Scout Car Platoon was sent to Damortis to contact the enemy in the vicinity of Agoo and notify the regiment by radio of enemy strength, composition and disposition. The regiment arrived at Rosario about 0800, where word was received from the Scout Car Platoon that it had arrived at Damortis but encountered opposition north of the town and was unable to proceed farther north. Observation at first light showed many transports and warships off Agoo, 80 in all, which turned out to be the first echelon of the Main Japanese Expeditionary force. Only scattered groups of Philippine Army troops were in the area under no unified command.

The mission given the 26th was a difficult one, to hold the enemy north of the Damortis-Rosario Road and, if forced to withdraw, to execute maximum delay along the axis Damortis-Rosario, thereby protecting the north flank of the North Luzon Force.

The road from Rosario to Damortis was a well-surfaced road running through the foothills. To the north rose the mountains of northern Luzon and to the south lay rather broken wooded country. The road was extremely winding. Five trails through the mountains led from Agoo Area, now in Japanese hands, to various points on the Rosario-Damortis Road, offering excellent opportunity for enemy outflanking movements as we moved on Damortis.

The regiment moved on Damortis at once to contact the enemy as far


THE WAR WITH JAPAN
120
PHILIPPINE CAMPAIGN
Operations in Northern Luzon
(22-29 December)
MAP 2
0 10 20 30
SCALE OF MILES
NORTH LUZON FORCE
WAINWRIGHT
LINGAYEN GULF
DASOL BAY
SOUTH CHINA SEA
NORTH PACIFIC OCEAN
BALER BAY
DINGALAN BAY
ZAMBALES MOUNTAINS
SIERRA MADRE MOUNTAINS
CARABALLO MOUNTAINS
LUZON
D-1
D-2
D-3
D-4
D-5
(Planned)
24 Dec.
22 Dec
23 Dec.
24 Dec
25 Dec.
27 Dec.
28 Dec.
29 Dec
29 Dec
11 (Part)
(71 Div)
48(-)
11 (-)
71(-)
RCT (91)
91
BAGUIO
BIRAC
SAN BENITO
AGOO
BOLINAO
AGNO
SUAL
LABRADO
BACABAC
SAN CARLOS
MALAMIQUI
CABARUAN HILLS
DAGUPAN
MANGALDAN
SAN FABIAN
SISON
DAMORTIS
SAPIT
TEB-BO
SANTA ROSA
SALACSAC
IMUGAN
SANTA FE
BALETE PASS
SAN ROQUE
SAN MANUEL
SAN NICOLAS
AYUG
SAN QUINTIN
DIGDIG
CARRANGLAN
BURGOS
DANGUL
ARITAO
BAYOMBONG
LUPAO
PANTABANGAN
SAN JOSE
RIZAL
MUNOZ
BALOC
BONGABON
PINAGPANAAN
CABU
NGATIAN
CUYAPO
NAMPICUAN
CAMILING
PANIQUI
VICTORIA
LICAB
LA PAZ
CAMP O'DONNELL
CAPAS
CONCEPCION
TIAONG
DOLORES
CLARK FIELD
DAU
MAGALANG
MT. ARAYAT
GAPAN
PAPAYA
UMIRAY
BALER
IBA
BOTOLAN
Agno R.
Pampanga R.

We established a screen of patrols from the left flank of the 31st Inf. to the mountains with the bulk of the regiment centrally located.

During the following night contact was lost between our right patrol and the 31st Inf. About 0230 a coded message was received from the 31st Inf. but it was impossible to decipher it. It later developed that the code of the day had been compromised and a new key-phrase had been issued but the regiment had not been informed.

At about 0400 a patrol under Lt. Leisinring reported that the 31st Inf. had apparently withdrawn from its position. It was decided to hold our position anyway but to send the Scout Car Platoon out as this road was the only way they could get out. They tried it, ran smack into the Jap Force and were completely wiped out.

Morning showed we were cut off by the entire Japanese Army. Considering the size of our force and the condition they were in the only solution was to try to rejoin our new lines at Abucay Hacienda over the mountain trails, which were unfamiliar and not on the map. After two days on these trails we finally succeeded in reaching our lines.

A week later the regiment was dismounted, attached to the 1st Corps on the west coast and participated in the Bataan defense as infantry. The remaining animals were turned over to the QM and supplemented the ration.

In this series of delaying actions all the principles were adhered to when possible. At other times they were practically all violated. However, the overall mission was accomplished even though we lost half of our officers killed and two-thirds of the regiment killed or missing.

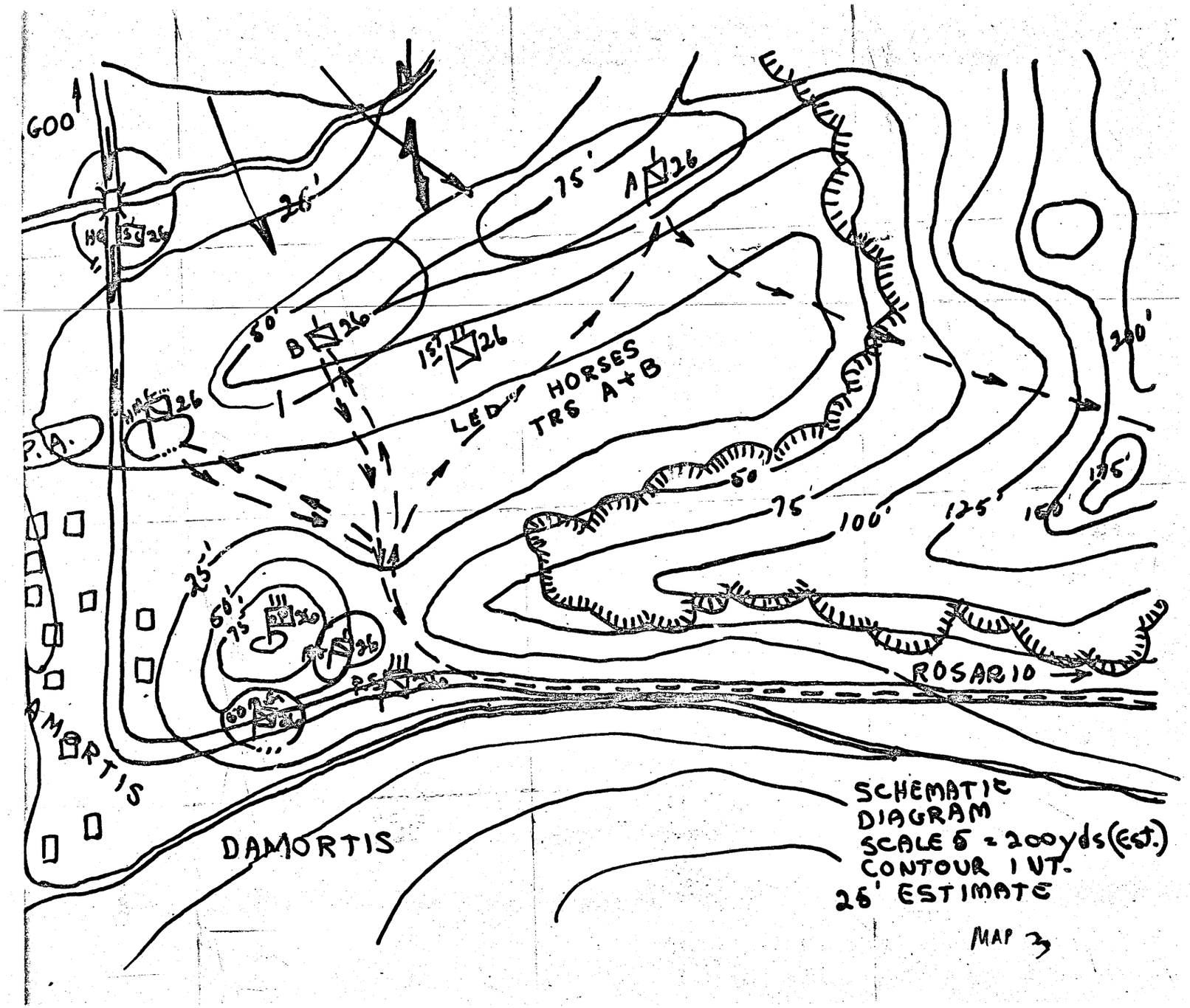
forward as possible. F Troop was divided into five strong combat patrols with one patrol placed on each of the trails leading northward from the Rosario-Damortis Road, with orders to push forward until opposition was encountered and block enemy movements to the south. As will be seen later this move actually saved the regiment from being outflanked early in the day and possibly destroyed.

Upon reaching Damortis we were informed that the Scout Car Platoon was in contact with strong enemy outposts about 1000 yds. north of the town and could advance no farther. Enemy shipping off Agoo consisted of many transports protected by destroyers, cruisers and numbers of dive bombers apparently carrier-based. These planes caused considerable casualties on our troops during the move from Rosario to Damortis, as the column had been under constant attack by successive groups of these planes.

The enemy force, preceded by tanks, was already moving forward to attack the right flank of our 11th Philippine Army Division.

The lateness of arrival and the vast superiority of the enemy force made an attack out of the question. The enemy scouts and advance units could already be seen feeling out our scout car positions and it was imperative that some sort of position be occupied at once or Damortis would be occupied without resistance.

The regiment went into a delaying position about 600 yds. north and east of Damortis. MAP 3 The only positions available were on rolling ground completely devoid of overhead cover, so the entire maneuver was conducted under harassment of enemy air. The discipline of the scouts was excellent, however, even under a hail of fragmentation bombs and strafing.


600'
26'
75'
A 26
50'
B 26
1st 26
LED HORSES
TRS A+B
P.A.
26
200'
175'
50
75
100'
125'
150
25'
50'
75
26
ROSARIO
AMORTIS
DAMORTIS
SCHEMATIC
DIAGRAM
SCALE 5 = 200yds (EST.)
CONTOUR INT.
25' ESTIMATE
MAP 3

Shortly after 1200 the main attack hit the regiment. It was made by tanks and infantry supported by 105 artillery, naval gunfire from ships in the Bay and by swarms of navy dive-bombers operating undisturbed overhead. As the attack developed it was obvious that the position couldn't be held long and it wasn't. (The first squadron on the left had already lost 4 officers and about a hundred men killed.) After 3 hrs. the regiment did get out, although our losses were heavy, broke contact and withdrew to a second delaying position on these hills 5 kms. to the east, which it occupied at about dusk.

(In this action, a rather strenous one for the regiments first time under fire, we were greatly handicapped by lack of artillery and anti-tank weapons. The short-sighted policy which governed our reorganization and re-equipment in early 1941 caused us many casualties in the following months, as well as rendering the regiment far less effective in the accomplishment of its many and varied missions, than would have been the case had we had the strength in men and weapons authorized for cavalry regiments in the States. Incidentally, the 71st Div., which was to be supporting us in this operation never got there.)

The regimental plan was to hold this second position throughout the night and the next day as long as possible. A change of orders from Corps came at this time to occupy the south bank of the Bued River and cover the right flank of the 71st Div. on its way up.

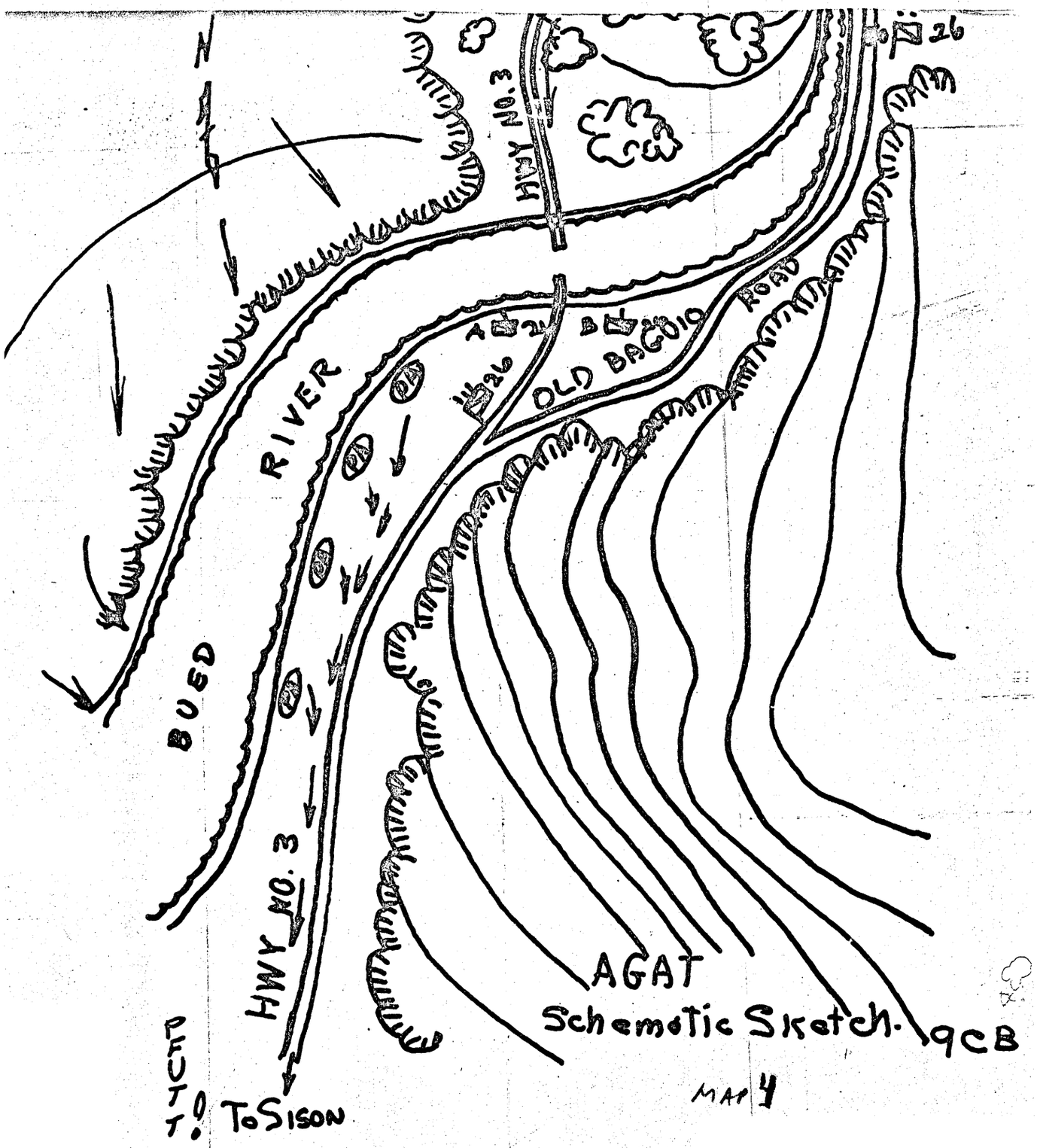
At dusk, as we were in the process of getting the second squadron out of this position, we were hit by a Jap tank attack and came very near to being routed. Again our losses in men and horses were heavy, but order was brought out of confusion and near disaster averted.

* *

As the regiment passed through Rosario in small groups, they passed within 20 ft. of F Troop whose patrols had been successively forced in from the mountain trails and were now just barely holding the enemy across the town square until the regiment could pass.

About midnight the new position was manned and when strength reports were called for there were less than 50% effectives in the line. During the next three days survivors of the two troops that had been overrun at Damortis rejoined us, having made their way across country individually. The exact casualties suffered in this action cannot be exactly estimated but they were extremely heavy.

Suitable defensive positions are not too plentiful in the country in which the regiment was now operating. The Bued River position was selected (map 4) because the river offered a natural barrier, although at this season it was by no means unfordable. The high bluffs offered a concealed position overlooking the river flats and the fields beyond. The river made a sharp bend to the south at this point and ran parallel to the road for almost a thousand yards and the road south of the bridge ran between a high mountain cliff on the east and a wide flat river bed easily fordable at any point on the west. The road was within easy range of small arms fire from concealed positions amongst the low brush on the far side of the river for several hundred yards. It may be seen, therefore, that the only route of withdrawal from our position at the Bued River Bridge was very exposed and definitely a weak point.


N
HWY NO. 3
26
RIVER
BUED
OLD BAGUIO ROAD
HWY NO. 3
TO SISON
AGAT
Schematic Sketch
QCB
MAP 4

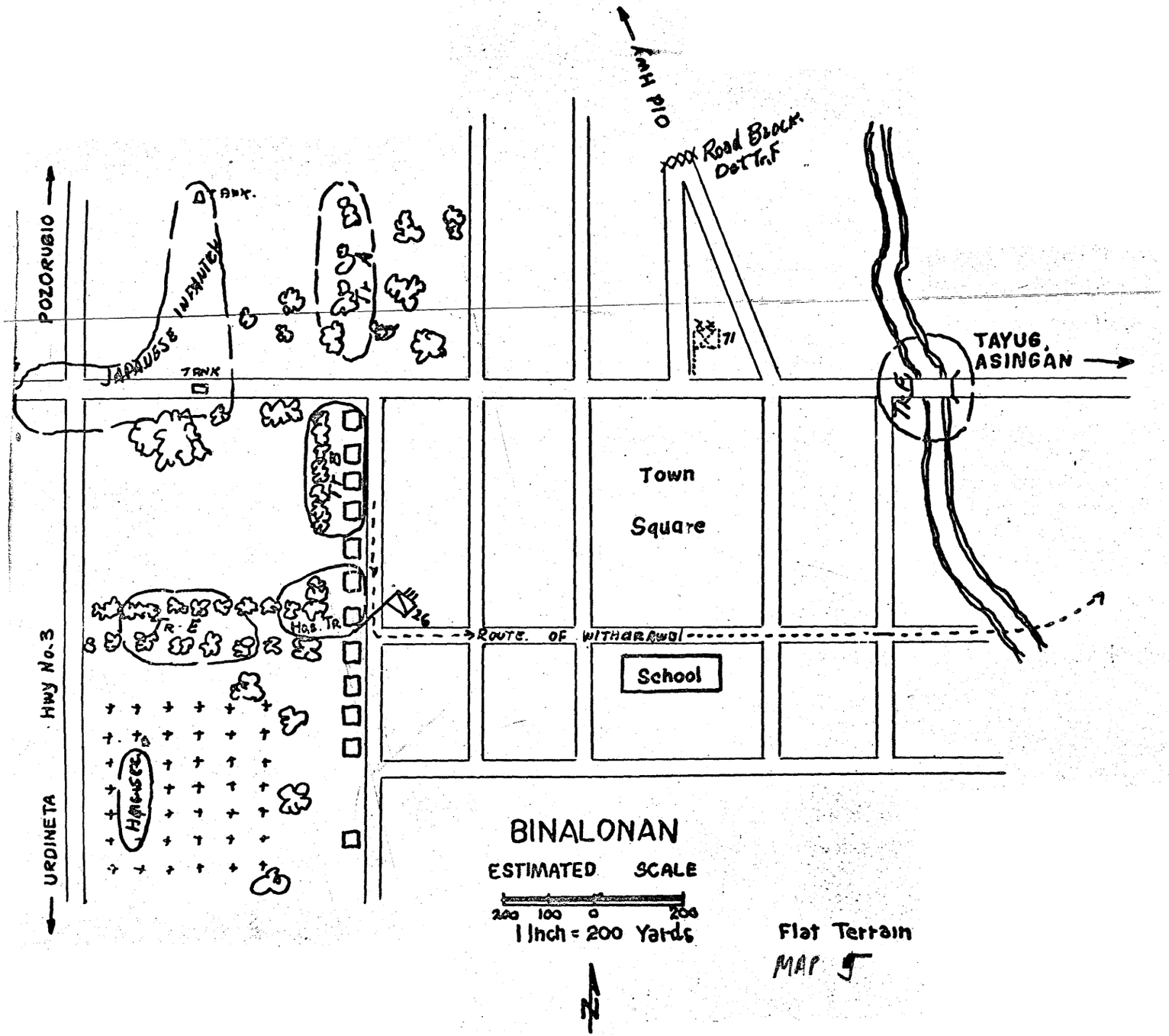
At midnight orders were received from C.G. North Luzon Force that the road to Baguio would be held open throughout the night and until noon the next day to enable troops in the Mountain Province to join our forces on the central plain. The bridge was blown and the road kept open until noon 23 Dec. but the regular troops from Baguio never got down.

During the night units of the 71st Div. extended our line along the river bank to the south and had they remained there we were pretty well set for the expected attack at daylight. However, just before daylight they were withdrawn to the new position being occupied by the 71st Div. near Sison.

The Japs attacked about 1000 in the morning and things weren't going too badly until a battalion started outflanking the regiment along the Bued. Since the 71st by this time was in position another withdrawal was indicated and orders were received to proceed to Binalonan in Div. Reserve, where the rear echelon of the 71st Div. was located.

At 0100, 24 Dec. the Div. Commander arrived at our C.P. and said that the Sison Line was just barely holding and might break during the night, but that the 91st Infantry was moving in to strengthen the line. Although well behind the lines the regiment put out its own outposts while the rest of the men got their first sleep in four days.

At 0500, 24 Dec. the Japs poured through the Sison line and hit us head on. The position the regiment occupied was around the outskirts of the town of Binalonan. (MAP 5) The deep ditches along side of the road made excellent ready-made trenches and our presence being a complete surprise they were stopped cold.



Old Hwy
Road Block Det Tr. F
POZORUBIO
TANK
JAPANESE INFANTRY
TANK
TAYUG, ASINGAN
Town Square
School
ROUTE OF WITHDRAWAL
Hwy No. 3
URDINETA
BINALONAN
ESTIMATED SCALE
200 100 0 200
1 Inch = 200 Yards
Flat Terrain
MAP 5
N

Meanwhile the Japs continued to launch repeated attacks on our front with unbelievable stupidity. They were stopped every time by rifle and machine gun fire but would try again. One sustained attack preceeded by tanks would have gone over our lines like a steam roller, but they held them back behind some bamboo thickets and shelled our position from there.

The North Luzon Force G-3 came into our position from this east road and said he did not know where the 71st Div. was, although it was fairly obvious now that he was in front of it. The Japs had launched repeated attacks against the Sison line the night before and had pierced it with an armored column just before daylight. Since then Hq. N. L. Force had received no word. He also informed us that Gen. MacArthur had put WPO3, the old war plan into effect the night before. This plan, well known and rehearsed by all units prior to the war but held in abeyance until now, called for a withdrawal into the Bataan Peninsula where we would hold out as long as possible. While more or less expected the news was discouraging in that it meant all chance of a major counter-attack was gone. The G-3 marked the daily phase lines of the withdrawal on a map and stated that the North Luzon force must hold the enemy north of San Fernando, Pampanga until the South Luzon force moved through Manila into Bataan. These phase lines were designated D-1 to D-5, with the last two to be held as long as possible, exact dates for withdrawing from them not being given. It all depended on the progress of the South Luzon Force.

The regiment held on until 1500 but as the day wore on it became obvious that if we were to get out it must be done at once. A lull in the fighting seemed to indicate that now was the time. A daylight withdrawal was tactically unsound and the only reason we got away with it was because for some unexplained reason the Jap planes were absent. And in pulling out cross country we had excellent cover of woods and banks of shallow streams.

Casualties in this action were again heavy. Of the officers a squadron commander and four lieutenants were killed. Dead and wounded among the enlisted men were much heavier than we could afford with our reduced strength and no relief appeared in sight. However, we had held up all enemy forces, except a tank column which had by-passed us toward Urdanetta, from 0500 to about 1600 and prevented their movement eastward until after 1700. This gave time to organize the D-1 line along the Agno river line.

The regiment moved toward Asingan to cover the right flank. We found considerable confusion at Taying. The 71st Div. had been hit so hard at Sison that it had scattered badly. (map 2) The 91st Div. was occupying this section of the line and was in good shape.

On Dec. 25 the 26th Cav. was attached to the 91st Div. for the next operation. The 91st Div., now occupying the line of the Agno River, was to withdraw to D-2 commencing at 1100, 25 Dec., leaving a shell on the river until dawn. The 26th Cav. would hold the river at Taying, covering the withdrawal of the 91st Div. and protecting the right flank of the North Luzon Force. One company of tanks would be attached to the regiment.

We took over the river line north of Taying astride this road late in the afternoon with the 2nd Squadron. B Troop was placed to the south-

west of town to cover a possible break-through of the 91st Div. shell on our left flank, and combat patrols were sent to the northeast towards Natividad. A Troop and C Co., 192nd Tk Bn were held in Taying in regimental reserve.

At 1900 the enemy pushed in our forward patrol and attacked the 2nd Squadron, which maintained its position without difficulty. Enemy tanks attempted to ford the Agno to the east but were stuck in the soft bottom. Sporadic firing and weak frontal attacks by the enemy continued through the night, while strong forces attempted to move around both flanks. Contact was maintained with the 91st Div. shell on our left flank but nothing could be done to extend our left flank, due to lack to troops. The only solution was to keep our flanks covered by patrols and to pull out at the last possible moment.

The position was enveloped on both flanks by 0300, 26th Dec. and the regiment withdrew according to prearranged plan in a fair example of timing. Thirty minutes more and we would have been encircled as Jap machine guns fired on us from our right and left rear as we moved out.

The regiment was ordered to Mexico behind phase line D-5, which was to hold for several days as North Luzon Force Reserve. (MAP 5) This would afford a chance to rest and shoe the horses, which were getting in really bad shape.

Arrived at Mexico at 0130, 29 December. At noon, G-3 North Luzon Force arrived at our bivouac with orders to move on Porac that night to cover the left flank. We talked him into a 24-hr. delay.

Arrived in Porac at 0200, 30 Dec. and reorganized into a horse squadron of three small troops and a motorized unit mounted in trucks. This makeshift organization was necessary because no replacements of men or animals were available. Some Bren gun carriers, destined for Singapore but dumped in


THE WAR WITH JAPAN
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PHILIPPINE CAMPAIGN
Operations in Southern Luzon and the Withdrawal to Bataan
MAP 5
0 10 20 30
SCALE OF MILES
LUZON
NORTH LUZON FORCE
WAINWRIGHT
SOUTH LUZON FORCE
PARKER (JONES)
USAFFE
MacARTHUR
FOURTEENTH
HOMMA
D-4
D-5
(Planned)
Actual, 31 Dec
28 Dec.
30 Dec
1 Jan
2 Jan
1-4 Jan.
5 Jan.
7 Jan.
31 Dec.
26-28 Dec.
29 Dec.
24 Dec.
Began moving into position 15 Jan.
En route to Bataan, 24 Dec.
MAIN BATTLE POSITION
CLARK FIELD
NIELSON FIELD
NICHOLS FIELD
MANILA BAY
LAGUNA DE BAY
LAMON BAY
SOUTH CHINA SEA
SUBIC BAY
CORREGIDOR I.
CABALLO I.
CARABAO I.
FT. HUGHES
FT. DRUM
FT. FRANK
CAMP O'DONNELL
FT. STOTSENBURG
MT. PINATUBO
MT. ORO
MT. SAMAT
TAGAYTAY RIDGE
CLARK FIELD
CAPAS
CONCEPCION
PAPAYA
GAPAN
MAGALANG
ARAYAT
SAN JOSE
SIBUL SPRINGS
UMIRAY
SAN FERNANDO
MEXICO
GUAGUA
LUBAO
BALIUAG
NORZAGARAY
CALUMPIT
PLARIDEL
MALOLOS
ST. MARIA
IPO
TAMALA
INFANTA
MONTALBAN
SAN MATEO
MARIKINA
PINUGAY
ANTIPOLO
PASIG
TAYTAY
PASAY
PARANAQUE
CAVITE
SAMPALOC
TANAY
SAN DIEGO
SINILOAN
MUNTINLUPA
LUPAS
PAGSANJAN
OLINGA
MAUBAN
LUCBAN
SAN PABLO
TAYABAS
ATIMONAN
CANLUBAN
LOS BANOS
TAGAYTAY
NASUGBU
ALAMINOS
BOTOLAN
SAN ANTONIO
SAN MARCELINO
SAN FELIPE
SUBIC
STA. RITA
OLONGAPO
DINALUPIHAN
ZISTAS PRES
BAGAC
MORONG
MAUBAN
PILAR
ORION
LIMAY
ABUCAY
DUCAL
GRANDE
DOLORES
TARLAC
CABU
XXX I WAINWRIGHT
XXX II PARKER
XXX XI KELES
XXX SOUTH LUZON FORCE
XXX NORTH LUZON FORCE
XXXX FOURTEENTH
XX 21
XX 91
XX 48(-)
XX 71(-)
XX 91(-)
XX 51
XX 41(-)
XX 51(-)
XX 16(-)
III (+)
III (-) (51 Div)
III 1(-)
III 26
III 31
III 9(-)
II 11
II
IC

Manila at the beginning of the war helped out.

Orders of Jan. 1st attached the regiment to the 21st Div. and we left Porac at 1900 the same day, arriving at San Jose that night. (MAP 5) The 21st Div. held a line from Porac halfway to Guagua, where it joined the 11th Div. The mission of the 26th Cav. was to cover the left flank of the 21st Div. toward the Zambales Mountains. Both the 21st and 11th Div. had received orders that they must hold for five days to permit the organization of defensive positions on Bataan. The South Luzon Force had completed its withdrawal into Bataan the night of 31 Dec., aided by the 21st and 11th Div. stand north of San Fernando and by the 91st Div. to the east. However, it was necessary now to prepare lines in Bataan to plug the entrance and the 21st and 11th were given the job of providing the time.

On the 2nd and 3rd of January the 21st repulsed repeated attacks on their front but no serious threat was made against the flank. On 4th Jan., however, the Japs launched a determined attack which pierced the 21st Div. line and forced it to fall back to San Jose Bataan. Contact was maintained, though, with the 11th Div. southwest of Guagua. The 26th covered the withdrawal of the 21st Div. and reached Danope on the left flank of the divisions new line at about 0200.

On 5 January the canefields in front of the 21st Div. were burned but the enemy failed to follow up his success, probably for the reason that he was making even better progress against the 11th Div. Strong enemy forces had outflanked the 10th Div. by moving through the swamps on his right flank and were now threatening his line of communications into Bataan. This development forced the withdrawal to take place at once and both divisions fell back to the Tayac Junction Bridge during the night of 5-6 and 6-7 January. The 26th Cav. covered this move and finally crossed the river about 0100, 7 Jan. and the bridge was

blown.

The 26th Cav. anticipated a period of rest behind the lines in Bataan but even before crossing the bridge at Tayac Junction orders were received from General Wainwright outlining the new organization of troops for the defense of Bataan and assigning a new mission for the regiment. The troops in Bataan were divided into two Corps, I Philippine Corps on the west coast commanded by General Wainwright and the II Philippine Corps on the east coast, commanded by Major General Parkes. The new line was to run from Moron on the west coast to Abucay on the east. (MAP 5 and 6) This line, unfortunately, was not continuous, being divided in the center by Mt. Silanganan and Mt. Natib both well over 4000 ft. high and with precipitous jungle-clad slopes. Contact between the two Corps was practically non-existant near the front as patrols required several days to negotiate the difficult terrain between the two Corps, and the detection of a hostile force penetrating this gap was problematical. It was some consolation, however, to feel that any such force could not be very large or carry very heavy weapons. We had yet to learn the full measure of determination and endurance of these Jap troops. While the Moron-Abucay line was being organized and occupied a temporary line through Culis and Hermosa, parallel to the Olongapo-Dinalupihan road was established by the remains of the 71st Div. and the 31st U. S. Infantry (American). The 26th Cav.'s mission was to cover the left flank of the 31st Inf., whose line stretched from the main road just north of Culis nearly to the mountains.

In compliance with these orders the regiment, upon crossing the bridge at Tayac Junction, moved immediately along an unimproved road through Culis behind the 31st Infantry's line to their left flank, arriving about daylight, 7 January.

COMMAND AND STAFF COLLEGE

FORT LEAVENWORTH, KANSAS.

SCHOOL OF COMBINED ARMS

REGULAR COURSE

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CAVALRY.

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PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A SQUADRON COMMANDER

TYPE OF OPERATION DESCRIBED - DELAYING ACTION

In the last war almost without exception the experience of our troops was in very successful offensive action. However, in the next war it may well be that we will initially and many times in many parts of the globe be forced into delaying action. Alaska, Japan, China, Europe may see the reverse of the type of operation that we were so fortunate to have had recently, at least at some stage of the hostilities. And it is astonishing what a greatly inferior force can accomplish if determined and skillfully maneuvered.

The purpose of this monograph is to cover the operations of the 26th Cavalry (P.S.) in delaying action from Lingayen to Bataan. Incidentally this was probably the last mounted regiment in the battlefield.

You all are undoubtedly familiar with the topography of Luzon, but I'll hastily describe it to refresh your memories.

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Corregidor defended Manila Bay from the sea, but the key to Corregidor was Bataan. If Bataan was held by an enemy force Corregidor would soon be untenable.

All planning for defense of the Philippine Islands prior to the war was based on the premise that the Japanese would land on Lingayen and attack down the great central plain with Manila as their objective, and reduce Corregidor from the rear and flank. For many years maneuvers were

held according to WPO3, which provided for delaying action against the invading force, from Lingayen and elements landed on Tayabas Bay, gradually withdrawing into Bataan, where they were supposed to hold out for six months. This was when the Philippine Div., 26th Cav. and a couple of C. A. regiments comprised the regular army troops in the Philippines.

When MacArthur took over after having organized the Philippine Army, WPO3 was discarded and the plan was to defend on the beaches. Nine divisions of the P. A. were on Luzon when the shooting started.

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The 26th Cavalry (P.S.) was a Philippine Scout Regiment, as indicated by the (PS) in its official designation, with home station at Fort Stotsenburg, Pampanga, about 60 miles north of Manila, and, with certain detachments, the regiment was there when the long expected blow fell on 8 December 1941. Troop F was stationed at Nichols Field and small detachments were on outpost duty at Baler and Dingalen Bays on the east coast of Luzon.

At 12:35, 8 December, as all the world knows, Clark Field was bombed and the best of our heavy bombers were destroyed. The Japs devoted most of their attention to Clark Field and the few planes that attacked adjacent Fort Stotsenburg did little damage.

On Dec. 9 the somewhat confused situation began to clarify. Further news of Pearl Harbor was received and rumors of enemy landings in Northern Luzon were investigated and found to be without foundation so far. News

of hostile carrier-based air attacks on Nichols Field and Iba Field made it soon apparent that our small air force had been wiped out in the first attack.

General Wainwright directed that the 26th Cav. would constitute a mobile reserve for the North Luzon force and would remain in the vicinity of Fort Stotsenburg in close contact with his Hq. until further notice.

On 12 Dec. word was received that the first hostile landing had been made at Apparri on the northern tip of Luzon.

On Dec. 13 news was received that another landing had been made at Vigan in strength. On 14 Dec. Gen. Wainwright moved his Hq. to Bam Ban and the 26th was moved to that area as Force Reserve. The regiment remained here through the 15th and 16th while events moved with considerable rapidity in the north. The hostile landing at Vigan was found to be so strong that our green Philippine Army Troops were unable to cope with it. The 26th was ordered to move north to Rosales on the Agno River, in order to be in a better position to launch a counter attack at any break-through in the North Luzon Force line from the southern arm of Lingayen Gulf to Vigan.

On 20 Dec. orders were received to send one troop dismounted, by truck to Bontoc, Mountain Province, with the mission of covering the road through Cervantes from the Japanese-held western coastal plain, and to prevent the enemy from using that road to attack Baguio from the rear.

By 21 Dec. the Japanese had expanded their beachhead at Vigan and brushed aside our Philippine Army forces in that area. General Wainwright

planned a swift counter-attack up the narrow coastal plain and ordered the 26th Cav. north to Rosario to participate in the attack.

The regiment moved out at 1500, 22 Dec. en route to Rosario. The Scout Car Platoon was sent to Damortis to contact the enemy in the vicinity of Agoo and notify the regiment by radio of enemy strength, composition and disposition. The regiment arrived at Rosario about 0800, where word was received from the Scout Car Platoon that it had arrived at Damortis but encountered opposition north of the town and was unable to proceed farther north. Observation at first light showed many transports and warships off Agoo, 80 in all, which turned out to be the first echelon of the Main Japanese Expeditionary force. Only scattered groups of Philippine Army troops were in the area under no unified command.

The mission given the 26th was a difficult one, to hold the enemy north of the Damortis-Rosario Road and, if forced to withdraw, to execute maximum delay along the axis Damortis-Rosario, thereby protecting the north flank of the North Luzon Force.

The road from Rosario to Damortis was a well-surfaced road running through the foothills. To the north rose the mountains of northern Luzon and to the south lay rather broken wooded country. The road was extremely winding. Five trails through the mountains led from Agoo Area, now in Japanese hands, to various points on the Rosario-Damortis Road, offering excellent opportunity for enemy outflanking movements as we moved on Damortis.

The regiment moved on Damortis at once to contact the enemy as far

forward as possible. F Troop was divided into five strong combat patrols with one patrol placed on each of the trails leading northward from the Rosario-Damortis Road, with orders to push forward until opposition was encountered and block enemy movements to the south. As will be seen later this move actually saved the regiment from being outflanked early in the day and possibly destroyed.

Upon reaching Damortis we were informed that the Scout Car Platoon was in contact with strong enemy outposts about 1000 yds. north of the town and could advance no farther. Enemy shipping off Agoo consisted of many transports protected by destroyers, cruisers and numbers of dive bombers apparently carrier-based. These planes caused considerable casualties on our troops during the move from Rosario to Damortis, as the column had been under constant attack by successive groups of these planes.

The enemy force, preceded by tanks, was already moving forward to attack the right flank of our 11th Philippine Army Division.

The lateness of arrival and the vast superiority of the enemy force made an attack out of the question. The enemy scouts and advance units could already be seen feeling out our scout car positions and it was imperative that some sort of position be occupied at once or Damortis would be occupied without resistance.

The regiment went into a delaying position about 600 yds. north and east of Damortis. The only positions available were on rolling ground completely devoid of overhead cover, so the entire maneuver was conducted under harassment of enemy air. The discipline of the scouts was excellent, however, even under a hail of fragmentation bombs and strafing.

Shortly after 1200 the main attack hit the regiment. It was made by tanks and infantry supported by 105 artillery, naval gunfire from ships in the Bay and by swarms of navy dive-bombers operating undisturbed overhead. As the attack developed it was obvious that the position couldn't be held long and it wasn't. (The first squadron on the left had already lost 4 officers and about a hundred men killed.) After 3 hrs. the regiment did get out, although our losses were heavy, broke contact and withdrew to a second delaying position on these hills 5 kms. to the east, which it occupied at about dusk.

(In this action, a rather strenous one for the regiments first time under fire, we were greatly handicapped by lack of artillery and anti-tank weapons. The short-sighted policy which governed our reorganization and re-equipment in early 1941 caused us many casualties in the following months, as well as rendering the regiment far less effective in the accomplishment of its many and varied missions, than would have been the case had we had the strength in men and weapons authorized for cavalry regiments in the States. Incidentally, the 71st Div., which was to be supporting us in this operation never got there.)

The regimental plan was to hold this second position throughout the night and the next day as long as possible. A change of orders from Corps came at this time to occupy the south bank of the Bued River and cover the right flank of the 71st Div. on its way up.

At dusk, as we were in the process of getting the second squadron out of this position, we were hit by a Jap tank attack and came very near to being routed. Again our losses in men and horses were heavy, but order was brought out of confusion and near disaster averted.

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As the regiment passed through Rosario in small groups, they passed within 20 ft. of F Troop whose patrols had been successively forced in from the mountain trails and were now just barely holding the enemy across the town square until the regiment could pass.

About midnight the new position was manned and when strength reports were called for there were less than 50% effectives in the line. During the next three days survivors of the two troops that had been overrun at Damortis rejoined us, having made their way across country individually. The exact casualties suffered in this action cannot be exactly estimated but they were extremely heavy.

Suitable defensive positions are not too plentiful in the country in which the regiment was now operating. The Bued River position was selected because the river offered a natural barrier, although at this season it was by no means unfordable. The high bluffs offered a concealed position overlooking the river flats and the fields beyond. The river made a sharp bend to the south at this point and ran parallel to the road for almost a thousand yards and the road south of the bridge ran between a high mountain cliff on the east and a wide flat river bed easily fordable at any point on the west. The road was within easy range of small arms fire from concealed positions amongst the low brush on the far side of the river for several hundred yards. It may be seen, therefore, that the only route of withdrawal from our position at the Bued River Bridge was very exposed and definitely a weak point.

At midnight orders were received from C.G. North Luzon Force that the road to Baguio would be held open throughout the night and until noon the next day to enable troops in the Mountain Province to join our forces on the central plain. The bridge was blown and the road kept open until noon 23 Dec. but the regular troops from Baguio never got down.

During the night units of the 71st Div. extended our line along the river bank to the south and had they remained there we were pretty well set for the expected attack at daylight. However, just before daylight they were withdrawn to the new position being occupied by the 71st Div. near Sison.

The Japs attacked about 1000 in the morning and things weren't going too badly until a battalion started outflanking the regiment along the Bued. Since the 71st by this time was in position another withdrawal was indicated and orders were received to proceed to Binalonan in Div. Reserve, where the rear echelon of the 71st Div. was located.

At 0100, 24 Dec. the Div. Commander arrived at our C.P. and said that the Sison Line was just barely holding and might break during the night, but that the 91st Infantry was moving in to strengthen the line. Although well behind the lines the regiment put out its own outposts while the rest of the men got their first sleep in four days.

At 0500, 24 Dec. the Japs poured through the Sison line and hit us head on. The position the regiment occupied was around the outskirts of the town of Binalonan. The deep ditches along side of the road made excellent ready-made trenches and our presence being a complete surprise they were stopped cold.

Meanwhile the Japs continued to launch repeated attacks on our front with unbelievable stupidity. They were stopped every time by rifle and machine gun fire but would try again. One sustained attack preceeded by tanks would have gone over our lines like a steam roller, but they held them back behind some bamboo thickets and shelled our position from there.

The North Luzon Force G-3 came into our position from this east road and said he did not know where the 71st Div. was, although it was fairly obvious now that he was in front of it. The Japs had launched repeated attacks against the Sison line the night before and had pierced it with an armored column just before daylight. Since then Hq. N. L. Force had received no word. He also informed us that Gen. MacArthur had put WPO3, the old war plan into effect the night before. This plan, well known and rehearsed by all units prior to the war but held in abeyance until now, called for a withdrawal into the Bataan Peninsula where we would hold out as long as possible. While more or less expected the news was discouraging in that it meant all chance of a major counter-attack was gone. The G-3 marked the daily phase lines of the withdrawal on a map and stated that the North Luzon force must hold the enemy north of San Fernando, Pampanga until the South Luzon force moved through Manila into Bataan. These phase lines were designated D-1 to D-5, with the last two to be held as long as possible, exact dates for withdrawing from them not being given. It all depended on the progress of the South Luzon Force.

The regiment held on until 1500 but as the day wore on it became obvious that if we were to get out it must be done at once. A lull in the fighting seemed to indicate that now was the time. A daylight withdrawal was tactically unsound and the only reason we got away with it was because for some unexplained reason the Jap planes were absent. And in pulling out cross country we had excellent cover of woods and banks of shallow streams.

Casualties in this action were again heavy. Of the officers a squadron commander and four lieutenants were killed. Dead and wounded among the enlisted men were much heavier than we could afford with our reduced strength and no relief appeared in sight. However, we had held up all enemy forces, except a tank column which had by-passed us toward Urdanetta, from 0500 to about 1600 and prevented their movement eastward until after 1700. This gave time to organize the D-1 line along the Agno river line.

The regiment moved toward Asingan to cover the right flank. We found considerable confusion at Taying. The 71st Div. had been hit so hard at Sison that it had scattered badly. The 91st Div. was occupying this section of the line and was in good shape.

On Dec. 25 the 26th Cav. was attached to the 91st Div. for the next operation. The 91st Div., now occupying the line of the Agno River, was to withdraw to D-2 commencing at 1100, 25 Dec., leaving a shell on the river until dawn. The 26th Cav. would hold the river at Taying, covering the withdrawal of the 91st Div. and protecting the right flank of the North Luzon Force. One company of tanks would be attached to the regiment.

We took over the river line north of Taying astride this road late in the afternoon with the 2nd Squadron. B Troop was placed to the south-

west of town to cover a possible break-through of the 91st Div. shell on our left flank, and combat patrols were sent to the northeast towards Natividad. A Troop and C Co., 192nd Tk Bn were held in Taying in regimental reserve.

At 1900 the enemy pushed in our forward patrol and attacked the 2nd Squadron, which maintained its position without difficulty. Enemy tanks attempted to ford the Agno to the east but were stuck in the soft bottom. Sporadic firing and weak frontal attacks by the enemy continued through the night, while strong forces attempted to move around both flanks. Contact was maintained with the 91st Div. shell on our left flank but nothing could be done to extend our left flank, due to lack to troops. The only solution was to keep our flanks covered by patrols and to pull out at the last possible moment.

The position was enveloped on both flanks by 0300, 26th Dec. and the regiment withdrew according to prearranged plan in a fair example of timing. Thirty minutes more and we would have been encircled as Jap machine guns fired on us from our right and left rear as we moved out.

The regiment was ordered to Mexico behind phase line D-5, which was to hold for several days as North Luzon Force Reserve. This would afford a chance to rest and shoe the horses, which were getting in really bad shape.

Arrived at Mexico at 0130, 29 December. At noon, G-3 North Luzon Force arrived at our bivouac with orders to move on Porac that night to cover the left flank. We talked him into a 24-hr. delay.

Arrived in Porac at 0200, 30 Dec. and reorganized into a horse squadron of three small troops and a motorized unit mounted in trucks. This makeshift organization was necessary because no replacements of men or animals were available. Some Bren gun carriers, destined for Singapore but dumped in

Manila at the beginning of the war helped out.

Orders of Jan. 1st attached the regiment to the 21st Div. and we left Porac at 1900 the same day, arriving at San Jose that night. The 21st Div. held a line from Porac halfway to Guagua, where it joined the 11th Div. The mission of the 26th Cav. was to cover the left flank of the 21st Div. toward the Zambales Mountains. Both the 21st and 11th Div. had received orders that they must hold for five days to permit the organization of defensive positions on Bataan. The South Luzon Force had completed its withdrawal into Bataan the night of 31 Dec., aided by the 21st and 11th Div. stand north of San Fernando and by the 91st Div. to the east. However, it was necessary now to prepare lines in Bataan to plug the entrance and the 21st and 11th were given the job of providing the time.

On the 2nd and 3rd of January the 21st repulsed repeated attacks on their front but no serious threat was made against the flank. On 4th Jan., however, the Japs launched a determined attack which pierced the 21st Div. line and forced it to fall back to San Jose Bataan. Contact was maintained, though, with the 11th Div. southwest of Guagua. The 26th covered the withdrawal of the 21st Div. and reached Danope on the left flank of the divisions new line at about 0200.

On 5 January the canefields in front of the 21st Div. were burned but the enemy failed to follow up his success, probably for the reason that he was making even better progress against the 11th Div. Strong enemy forces had outflanked the 10th Div. by moving through the swamps on his right flank and were now threatening his line of communications into Bataan. This development forced the withdrawal to take place at once and both divisions fell back to the Tayac Junction Bridge during the night of 5-6 and 6-7 January. The 26th Cav. covered this move and finally crossed the river about 0100, 7 Jan. and the bridge was

blown.

The 26th Cav. anticipated a period of rest behind the lines in Bataan but even before crossing the bridge at Tayac Junction orders were received from General Wainwright outlining the new organization of troops for the defense of Bataan and assigning a new mission for the regiment. The troops in Bataan were divided into two Corps, I Philippine Corps on the west coast commanded by General Wainwright and the II Philippine Corps on the east coast, commanded by Major General Parkes. The new line was to run from Moron on the west coast to Abucay on the east. This line, unfortunately, was not continuous, being divided in the center by Mt. Silanganan and Mt. Natib both well over 4000 ft. high and with precipitous jungle-clad slopes. Contact between the two Corps was practically non-existant near the front as patrols required several days to negotiate the difficult terrain between the two Corps, and the detection of a hostile force penetrating this gap was problematical. It was some consolation, however, to feel that any such force could not be very large or carry very heavy weapons. We had yet to learn the full measure of determination and endurance of these Jap troops. While the Moron-Abucay line was being organized and occupied a temporary line through Culis and Hermosa, parallel to the Olongapo-Dinalupihan road was established by the remains of the 71st Div. and the 31st U. S. Infantry (American). The 26th Cav.'s mission was to cover the left flank of the 31st Inf., whose line stretched from the main road just north of Culis nearly to the mountains.

In compliance with these orders the regiment, upon crossing the bridge at Tayac Junction, moved immediately along an unimproved road through Culis behind the 31st Infantry's line to their left flank, arriving about daylight, 7 January.

We established a screen of patrols from the left flank of the 31st Inf. to the mountains with the bulk of the regiment centrally located.

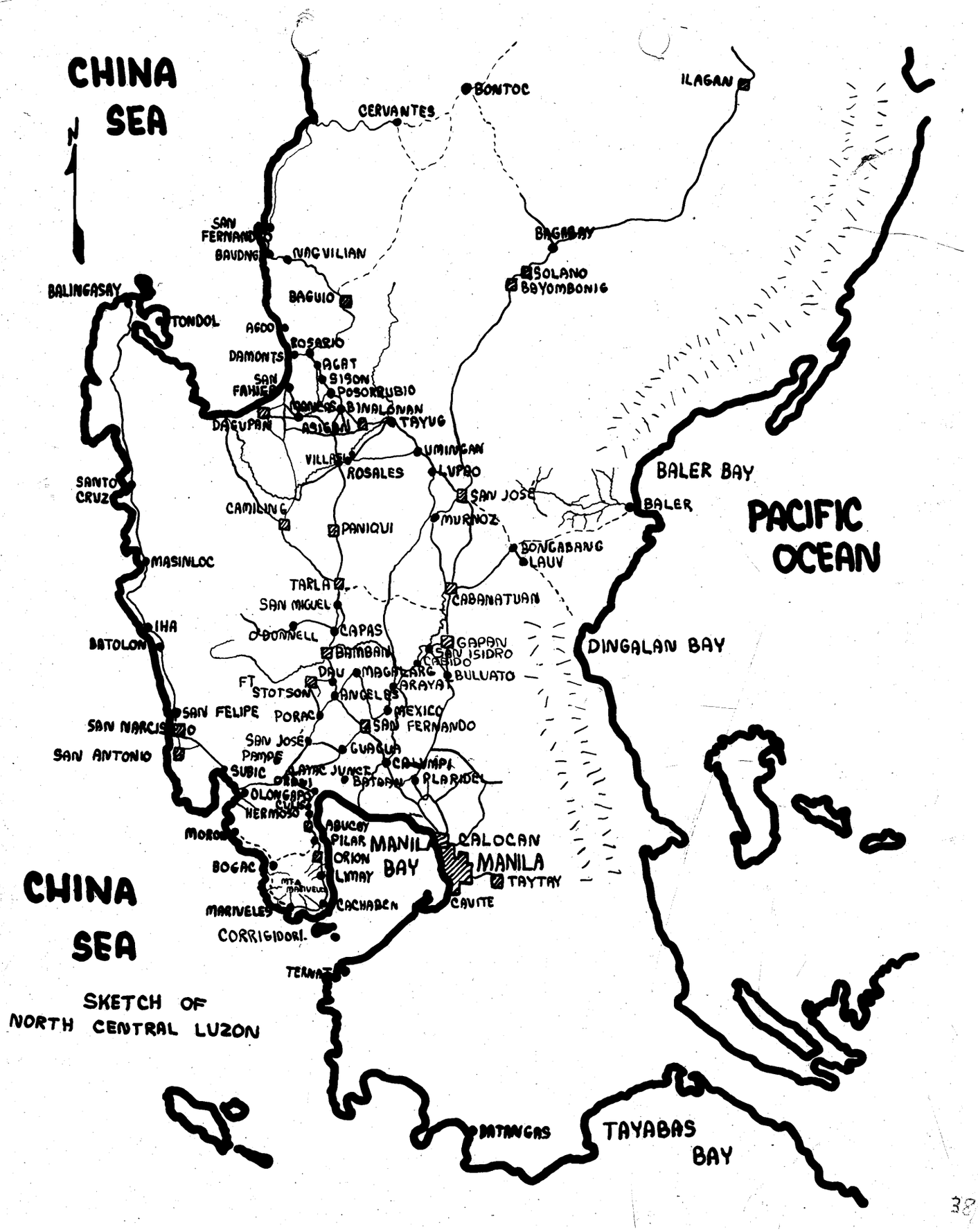
During the following night contact was lost between our right patrol and the 31st Inf. About 0230 a coded message was received from the 31st Inf. but it was impossible to decipher it. It later developed that the code of the day had been compromised and a new key-phrase had been issued but the regiment had not been informed.

At about 0400 a patrol under Lt. Leisinring reported that the 31st Inf. had apparently withdrawn from its position. It was decided to hold our position anyway but to send the Scout Car Platoon out as this road was the only way they could get out. They tried it, ran smack into the Jap Force and were completely wiped out.

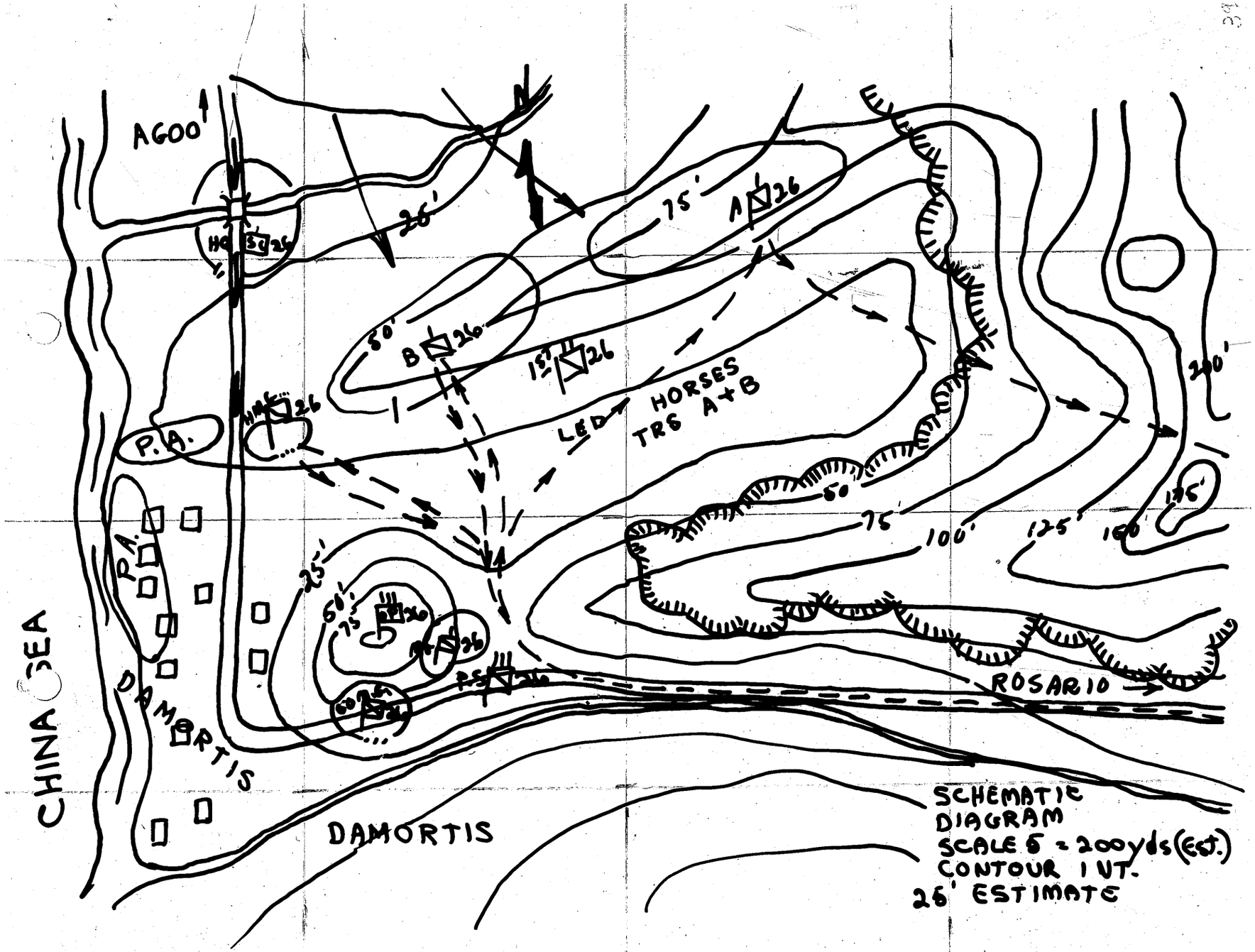
Morning showed we were cut off by the entire Japanese Army. Considering the size of our force and the condition they were in the only solution was to try to rejoin our new lines at Abucay Hacienda over the mountain trails, which were unfamiliar and not on the map. After two days on these trails we finally succeeded in reaching our lines.

A week later the regiment was dismounted, attached to the 1st Corps on the west coast and participated in the Bataan defense as infantry. The remaining animals were turned over to the QM and supplemented the ration.

In this series of delaying actions all the principles were adhered to when possible. At other times they were practically all violated. However, the overall mission was accomplished even though we lost half of our officers killed and two-thirds of the regiment killed or missing.



SKETCH OF NORTH CENTRAL LUZON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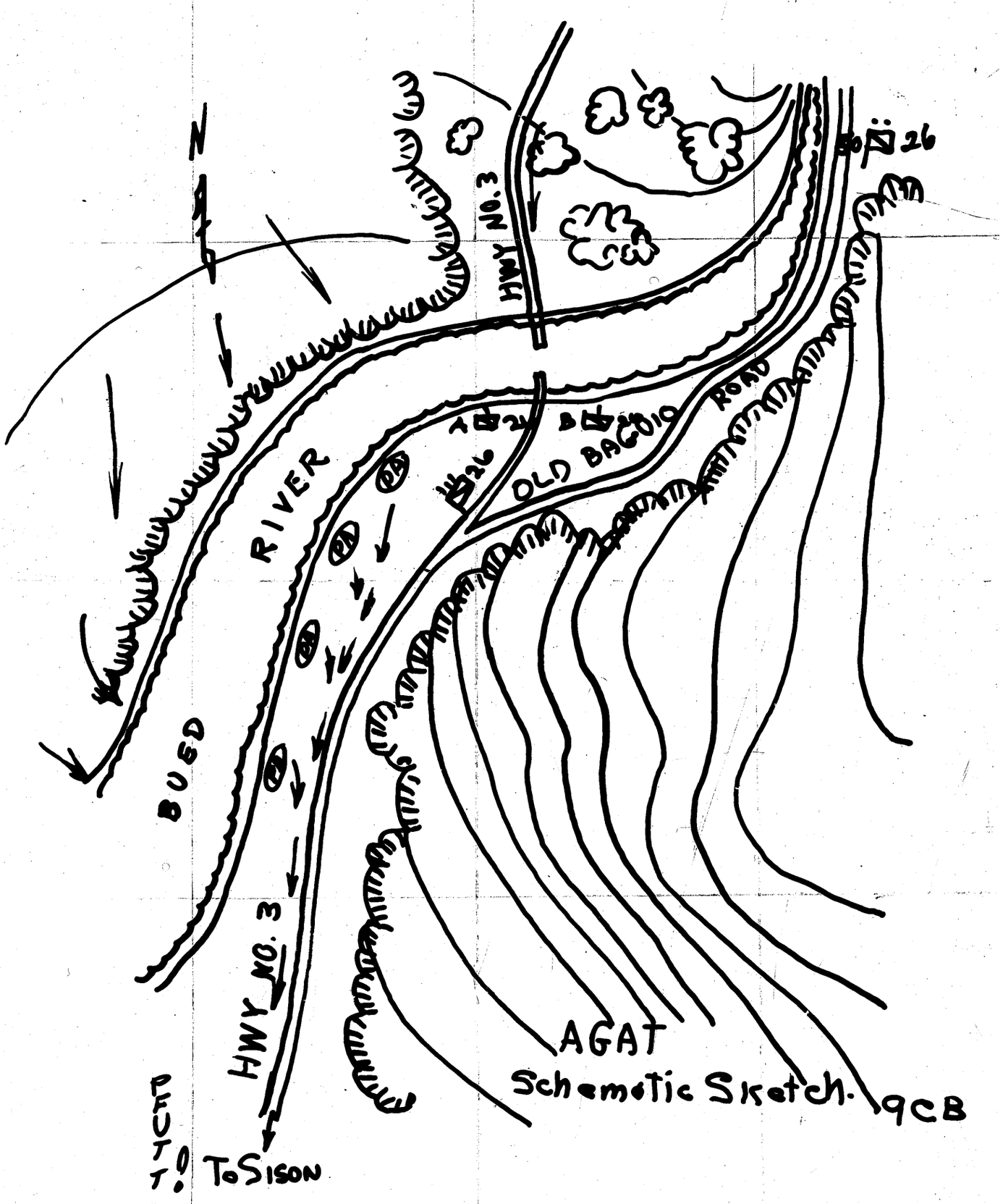
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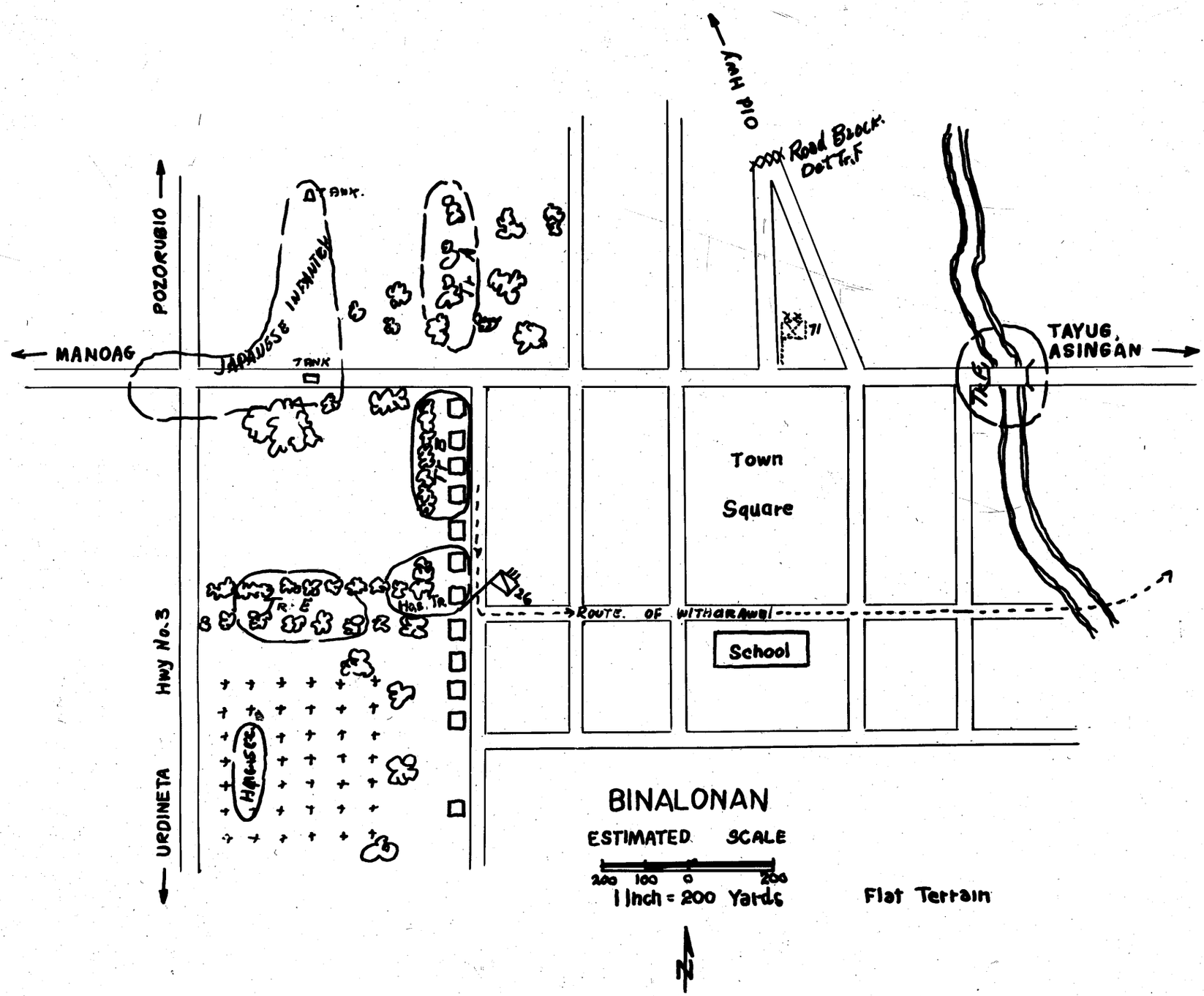

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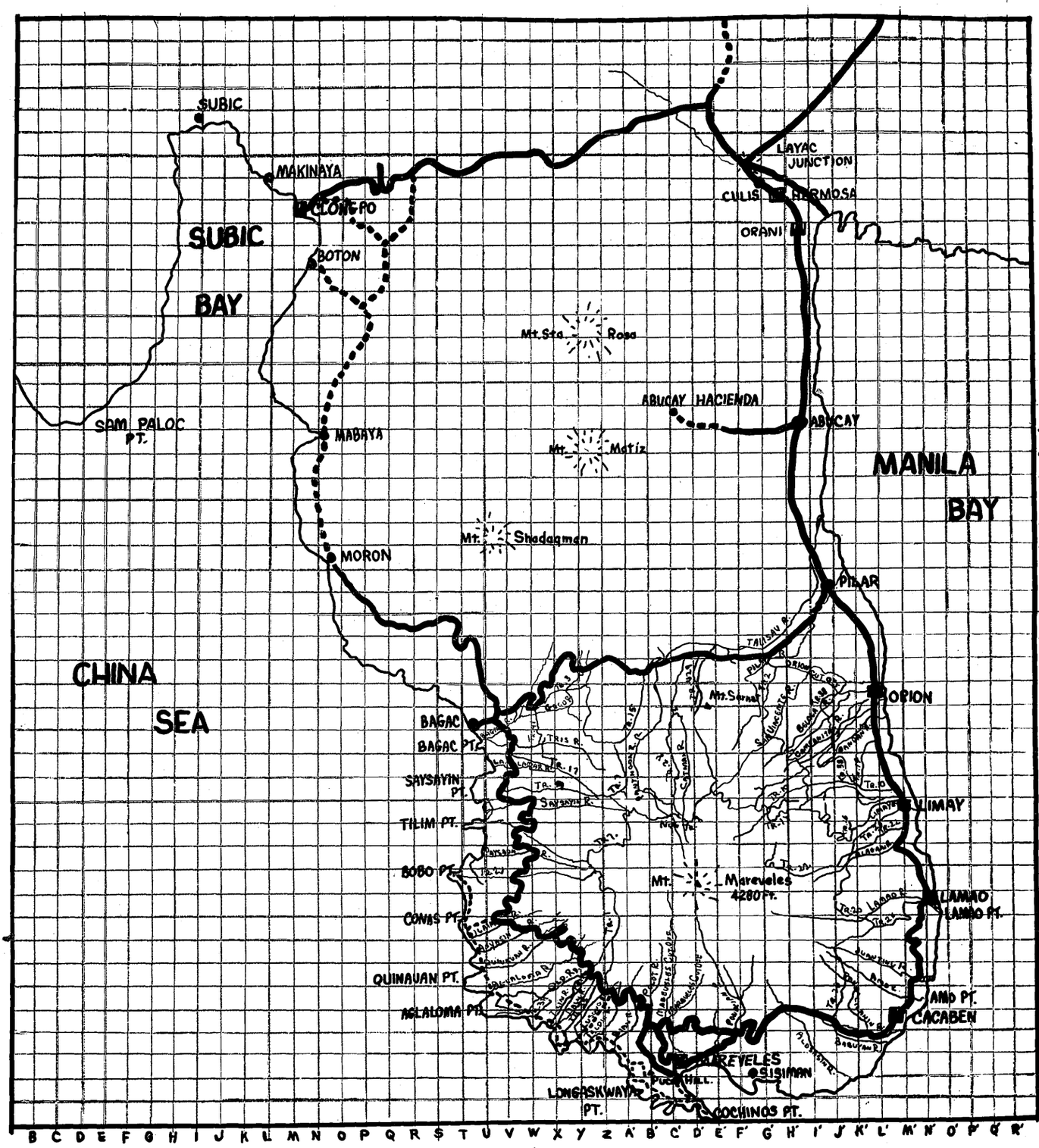
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ABUCAY HACIENDA
ABUCAY
SAM PALOC
PT.
MABAYA
Mt. Matiz
MANILA
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Mt. Shadagman
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