

The PC's Role in the Last Battle of Bataan

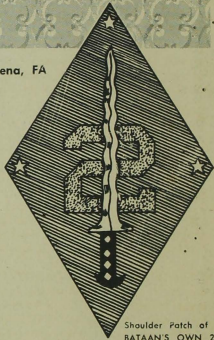


By Captain Ambrosio P. Pena, FA

HE full wrath of the hostile force was brought to bear against the USAFFE after the long lull it enjoyed from mid-February to the last week of March 1942. At the latter period, the enemy, having received vast reinforcements from China, Malaya, the mainland of Japan and the Dutch East Indies, completed reorganization of his forces. He was now poised to launch an assault essayed at breaking the backbone of the USAFFE.

Prelude to the Last Battle

The main attack force was assembled in front of Mt. Samat. The enemy had calculated that as soon as this formidable barrier was taken, the rest of Bataan could be had with trifling effort. Supporting this assault force was a heavy concentration of artillery pieces west of Balanga, positioned at 30-yard intervals and with a total frontage and depth of about five square kilometers. The enemy was so confident in the success of this projected



Shoulder Patch of
BATAAN'S OWN 2ND
REGULAR DIVISION

operation that he had not even bothered with a secondary plan of action just in case it should fall. By his own admission after the war, the enemy had expected the capitulation of Bataan in one month's time. But this was too conservative an estimate.

In the last week of March the enemy launched several exploratory probes along the east-central front of the Pilar-Bagac Line. Then on the 1st of April, he launched a limited infantry attack supported by artillery and the air force. Fighting indomitably, the 21st and 41st Divisions threw back the attack.

The next day was comparatively quiet, which was startling and ominous. Enemy activity was confined to occasional aerial and artillery bombardments as well as limited aerial reconnaissance. The artillery, directed by air observers and from balloons flown high in the rear hostile area, continued bombarding the

Expecting the capitulation of Bataan in one month's time, the Japanese invaders gravely miscalculated the ability of the gallant Fil-American defenders, including the constabulary fighters, who time and again stalled the potent forces of invasion and prolonged the fight by sheer courage and determination, thus upsetting the entire Japanese timetable

USAFFE dispositions with growing intensity. Toward nightfall the entire battleground became quiet again.

The Breakthrough

The 3rd of April was *Jimmu-Tenno*, the Foundation Day of the Japanese Empire. For the Fil-American troops it was Good Friday, which began rather quiet and foreboding. Suddenly as the sun rose, hostile planes were all over Bataan, flying directly to the east-central front where they unleashed their bombs on the northern undulations of Mt. Samat. By 0900 hours, the hostile artillery opened fire increasing in tempo with the passing minutes. The combined fury from the air and artillery was unfortunately

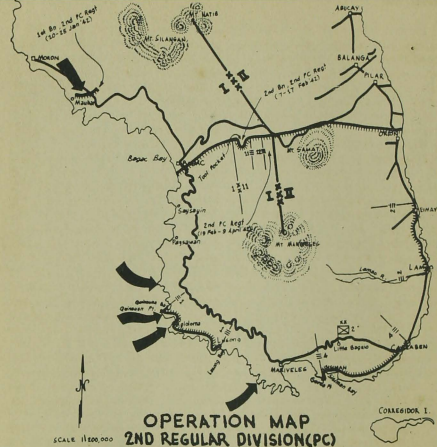
confined on a five-kilometer frontage on which the limiting point of the 21st and 41st divisions was located.

The artillery fire was so planned and executed that the first volleys fell just in the rear of the MLR and the succeeding rounds were gradually lobbed northward (backward) until every foot of friendly ground was hit. The shelling and aerial bombardments went on unabated hour after hour, totally disrupting all communication lines and interdicting all routes of retreat. The friendly artillery which has thus far been the mainstay of the USAFFE stood helplessly silent for fear of giving

away its positions.

By 1400 hours the right flank of the 41st Division was so badly smashed that its elements began to filter to the rear. The left flank of the 21st Division also wavered, but it quickly reformed in a fish hook formation to the rear in a brave effort to contain the thrust. An opening had been made which the enemy hoped to exploit fully.

The enemy had set his *Zero Hour* at 1500, 3 April 1942. On the dot the hostile infantry and tanks which had been assembled in front of Mt. Samat since mid-March, moved in for the kill. Meanwhile, the hostile artillery had shifted its entire fury against the rear area of the front-



OPERATION MAP 2ND REGULAR DIVISION(PC)

Showing its initial (7 Jan 42)
and subsequent dispositions

line units, while the air force conducted a number of tactical missions over the front-line dispositions before turning its efforts to the more distant USAFFE dispositions in the rear area.

Preceded by tanks that smashed the remaining machine-gun and anti-tank emplacements, the hostile infantry charged upon the artillery-made openings at the MLR which was seized without much opposition.

The blow had been very severe while the destruction wrought on the front-line dispositions was very heavy. The troops of the 41st were greatly demoralized. By nightfall the enemy had penetrated deep into the 41st Division sector. A few hours more and the enemy wrest control of the summit of Mt. Samat.

The friendly artillery was called in the evening but as it opened fire, the hostile air force swooped and

rained more bombs. This was one of the few occasions on Bataan in which the enemy air force undertook a night mission.

The friendly artillery, once a powerful weapon, was now wholly neutralized.

On 4 April, the enemy installed his observation posts on Mt. Samat and from these vantage points directed his artillery in pounding at the rear USAFFE dispositions of the II Corps under Major General George M. Parker, Jr. The infantry and tanks, meanwhile, kept pressing on the attack with increasing fury against which USAFFE's opposition became increasingly less. The enemy continued to roll the II Corps with a distinctly regular pattern.

After gaining the most important artery of communication, the enemy turned his attack generally to the southeast, utilizing for this purpose Trails 4, 6, and 29 and later Trails 2, 44 and 429. All resistance that had been hastily set up along the way, was smashed. By 6 April, the entire II Corps was driven far beyond the MLR leaving the right flank of the I Corps, now under Major General Albert M. Jones, totally exposed. The II Corps was fast disintegrating it was not even possible for its headquarters to keep tab of its losses nor of the situation on the front-line.

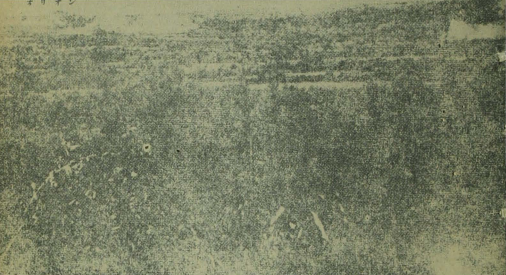
A last desperate effort was effected to stem the Japanese advance when II Corps headquarters ordered Brigadier General Bluemel to assume command of all the front-line troops who had so far escaped the enemy wrath. General Bluemel would utilize

these men in organizing a new line generally along the north bank of Mamala River above the town of Limay. On the afternoon of 7 April, this new line was established. But before its left wing could be physically occupied, it was abandoned.

Reinforcements

Meanwhile, USAFFE headquarters released its reserves consisting of the American 31st Infantry, the 45th Infantry, PS, the 57th Infantry, PS, and the 26th Cavalry, PS, to the II Corps which reinforcements still were sadly lacking. As a last measure, Major General Guillermo B. Francisco, Commanding General of the 2nd Regular Division and of Sub-sector "E", was ordered to abandon his northern beach positions and release Colonel Rafael Jalandoni's 4th PC Regiment and Lieutenant Colonel Vicente L. Torres' 2nd Engineer Battalion to General Bluemel's command. These units were placed under the overall command of Col. Jalandoni.

At 1800 hours, the 4th PC and the 2nd Engineer were moved to Limay, where they were further ordered to the west-northwest via Trail 2 thence Trail 8. Near the junction of Trail 8 and Trail 44, these units were to deploy and organize the left wing of the Mamala River line. In the prevailing confusion and for lack of time, the movement was made without previous reconnaissance or intelligence of the situation obtaining at the indicated sector. As a consequence the leading elements of the 4th PC Regiment, near the trail junction ran into newly established Japanese positions. Other elements



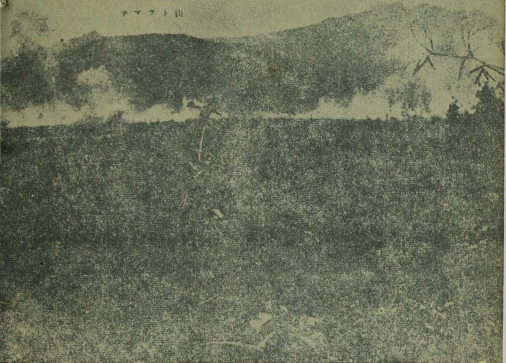
This captured Japanese photograph shows the USAFFE frontline subjected to intense artillery bombardment at the start of the great offensive of 3 April 1942. Note the Japanese characters which indicates, from left to right: Mt. Orion, Mt. Samat and Mt. Mariveles.

ran into newly set-up road blocks of tanks. In the ensuing melee many officers and men were killed, including Majors Isidoro Agudo and Manuel Fernandine, S-4 and Assistant S-4, respectively, of the 4th PC Regiment. The 57th Infantry which had previously been deployed near the trail junction had been earlier withdrawn.

Before Col. Jalandoni could establish his line, an American liaison officer from the II Corps headquarters arrived to inform him to withdraw since Limay was already rendered untenable. Besides the situation in the farther north was so

vague and it was unknown whether there were still friendly troops in that area. The point of withdrawal indicated was generally along the south bank of Alangan River midway between Limay and Lamao.

The withdrawal was made at great risk to the 4th PC and 2nd Engineer since the road was badly congested and was continuously bombed and strafed in spite of the growing darkness. By midnight of 7-8 April, Colonels Jalandoni and Torres completed the organization of their assigned sector on the Alangan River line, generally 1500 yards to the east and west of the national highway.



At this juncture, Col. Jalandoni found that several of his units were missing. At 0500 hours, 8 April, he ordered his executive, Major Gaspar Baylon, to return up north. But after four hours Major Baylon returned to RCP and reported that there were no traces of the missing units. Colonel Jalandoni was therefore forced to extend the frontage of his few available units to cover his assigned sector.

The enemy planes were busy throughout that day. So was the hostile artillery which subjected the new Alangan River line to incessant searching fire, forcing the U.S. Ar-

my rifle-equipped air men deployed to the left of the Constabulary units to withdraw at 0800. A provisional outfit that had been hastily assembled and thrown to the right of the Constabulary units also withdrew at 1300 leaving both flanks of the Constabulary line totally exposed.

The Last Fight

Shortly before noonday, the hostile infantry launched another savage attack along the axis of the national highway, hitting hard the center of the Constabulary line. Despite the brave, magnificent stand put up by the Constabulary men several penetrations were made. The situation

was fast deteriorating, and as an expedient, Col. Jalandoni committed into the fight all the available men he could lay his eyes on, including the truck drivers, the medics, and the mess personnel. He then ordered a counter-attack launched in a frantic effort to save his command.

The order fell on responsive ears. The Constabulary men rose from their holes, and with sheer courage and with their remaining strength rushed forward for a head-on clash with the enemy. Colonel Torres and Lieutenant Colonel Frank Lloyd, senior American instructor of the 4th PC, joined effort in rallying the men into exerting the most of their dissipated strength. It was on this occasion that Col. Torres, although previously wounded in the neck by two shell fragments displayed his coolness, his aggressive leadership and keen devotion to duty, by remaining with his troops, setting for them the finest example of gallantry, for which he earned from the U.S. Army the Legion of Merit and Purple Heart and from the Philippine Army the Distinguished Conduct Star and the Wounded Soldier's Medal. Also, it was on this occasion when Lt. Enrique Manaois, of the 2nd Engr. Bn., led his platoon in recapturing a Japanese position by a cliff overlooking the highway and the town of Limay. Lt. Manaois subsequently held back repeated charges of the enemy until late in the evening. For the gallant stand, he was decorated with the Gold Cross.

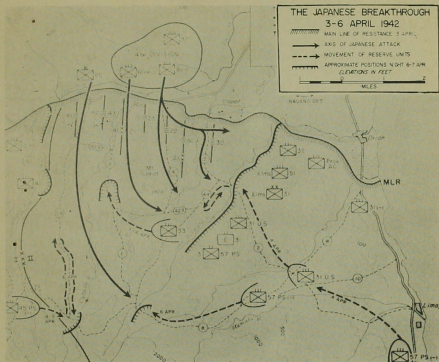
Although the penetrations were thrown back, the Constabulary units

found themselves in tight strait. The Japanese poured a large body of troops through the exposed flanks and by nightfall began to subject the Constabulary line to a three-pronged attack. And yet against this fury the Constabulary men, living up to its glorious past, held on tenaciously to their positions. Colonel Jalandoni had earlier issued orders to hold the line at all costs.

But unknown to Col. Jalandoni was the fact that the situation had turned for the worst. The Japanese artillery had earlier been moved forward and was now within range of vital USAFFE installations at Lamao, at Cabcaban, and at Mariveles. The base hospitals, overcrowded with over a thousand patients, were now within shooting distance of the hostile artillery. The patients laid helplessly, and it was reasoned by Bataan's high command that they would be massacred mercilessly if resistance continued.

No power seemed to be able to stave off the Japanese onslaught. The enemy pressure became increasingly heavier with the passing of minutes. But Col. Jalandoni kept exhorting his men to hold on as reinforcements were on the way to their succor. Earlier he had requested his division commander to send him men which request, evidently, did not reach Gen. Francisco.

As night began to deepen, it was thought best to straighten out the situation before chaos broke loose on account of darkness. Colonel Lloyd and Major Baylon reasoned with Col. Jalandoni that without any reinforcements their line would not hold



much longer. It was therefore best to withdraw before the men would be helplessly ensnared in the hostile trap, and uselessly sacrificed.

In spite of the overwhelming odds, Col. Jalandoni still dilly-dallied on the proposition, hopefully believing that with reinforcements he could hold the line longer. He had learned that a big portion of his missing units had filtered to the division headquarters and had therefore sent word to Gen. Francisco to send these units to him.

The End of Battle

The units were rounded up and immediately ordered to the front-line. However, they were consider-

ably delayed by the southward traffic. The units were still on the way when Gen. Francisco got in touch with Col. Jalandoni to inform him that the fight was over. Surrender negotiation was underway. The General followed the information with orders for Col. Jalandoni to move his men back to Cabcaban.

On the west coast, the 1st PC Regiment and the 2nd Anti-Tank Battalion of the 2nd Regular Division, both attached to the 71st Division, enjoyed comparative quiet during those few remaining days of Bataan. Except for the occasional bombings and naval bombardments, the enemy never bothered with them.

They were therefore spared the full wrath that the enemy mounted in the east sector. The news of the disintegration of the II Corps and subsequently the surrender seemed so unbelievable and only became real when they were told to lay down their arms on the morning of 9 April.

On the west-central front, the 2nd PC Regiment, 2nd Regular Division, commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Manuel V. Atanacio until the latter part of March 1942, which had earlier been attached to the 11th Division, was likewise spared the whole fury of the last battle of Bataan. The regiment, especially its right flank, was shelled heavily, but was not subjected to an infantry attack. The men of the regiment, however, noted the thunderous explosions of bombs and shells to their right beginning on the 1st of April. And then after 3 April, more and more men from the 41st Division crossed the Pantangan River to the sector of the 2nd PC Regiment.

The men of the 2nd PC Regiment were told of the breakthrough and of the terrific beating the 41st Division was getting. But these news fell on disbelieving ears. It seemed hardly probable then that the Pilar-Bagac Line would crack. The 2nd PC men held on their MLR positions, still hoping that the promised aid would finally come.

And then a more realistic picture of the situation presented itself. The 2nd PC Regiment was ordered to vacate the MLR on the afternoon of 8 April and move 7 kilometers behind where new positions were to be organized, generally along the

west bank of the Pantangan River. This new line was occupied at 1900 hours, but except for its combat patrols, the new regimental sector remained quiet.

At 0800 hours the next day, the regiment was again ordered farther to the rear where some of its elements established a perimeter defense around the 11th Division CP, while the bulk were assigned to man the RRL just above the CP. Still the much awaited battle did not materialize. At noontime the regiment was informed of the surrender of Bataan.

The sad tidings was too much to bear, and as the Constabulary men began to lay down their arms and raise the white flag of surrender, there were tears on their eyes. Men became vocal in upbraiding Uncle Sam for not sending on time the promised aid. But, generally, the men still felt hopeful that at the end victory would be theirs.

And so, even as the men of the 1st PC Regiment were being marched from their positions to RCP at kilometer 189; even as the men of the 2nd PC Regiment were being marched to the assembly point along Saysain River, they still kept faith in the strength of Mother America and of Mother America winning the war at the end.

The 4th PC Regiment, meanwhile, which had suffered about 30 percent casualties during the past 36 hours of fighting at the Mamala and Alangan lines, had been gathered near the 2nd Regular Division CP to wait for the instructions attendant to the surrender.



Japanese soldiers penetrating through the exposed flanks of the Constabulary line

The brave 2nd Regular Division whose men had in the past known hard times in the jungles of Mindanao and Sulu, the Sierra Madres, and the Mountain Province, chasing outlaw bands and headhunters, had now reached the end of the road. Despite the tremendous odds the men faced, they fought the last battle of Bataan with exemplary courage in keeping with one fine tradition of the Constabulary corps — *"Outnumbered but never out-fought."* Even

on Bataan they were never outfought because unto the end of the bloody trail, they kept faith in their cause.

The end had now come.



This account constitutes Chapter XVIII of the After Action Report of the 2nd Regular Division which is due for printing in book form in the near future. It is based on official citations and largely on interviews with the officers and men who participated in that last battle. The author requests readers who had belonged to the 2nd Regular Division to send in their comments and other vital data which may be utilized in bringing this account as factual and accurate as possible.