

# Marine Force Evolution



*by Lt. Francisco R. San Miguel, PN*

**T**HE Republic of the Philippines is strategically situated that she is destined to be involved in any major struggle in the Far East. She is a part of a chain of islands that includes Sakhalin, Kuriles, Japan, Ryukus, Formosa and Indonesia. This chain links the Russian Kamchatka peninsula to the Australian continent, and is a natural axis of advance from north to south as used by the Japanese forces in 1941-42, or from south to north as used by the allied forces in 1943-45. It also serves as a line of defense as the Japanese used it and as the western powers are using it now against

the threat of Communism. The Philippines is, furthermore, a link in the series of Pacific island groups which are a chain in the east-west route.

Considering the central position of the Philippine Islands in relation to the troubled areas of Korea, China, Malaya and Indonesia, national defense against any foreign power that may wish to take advantage of this position is basic.

The Philippines has a complicated defense necessity in the sense that it is composed of 7,083 islands spread out for 1,200 miles from north to south and scattered 700 miles from east to west.

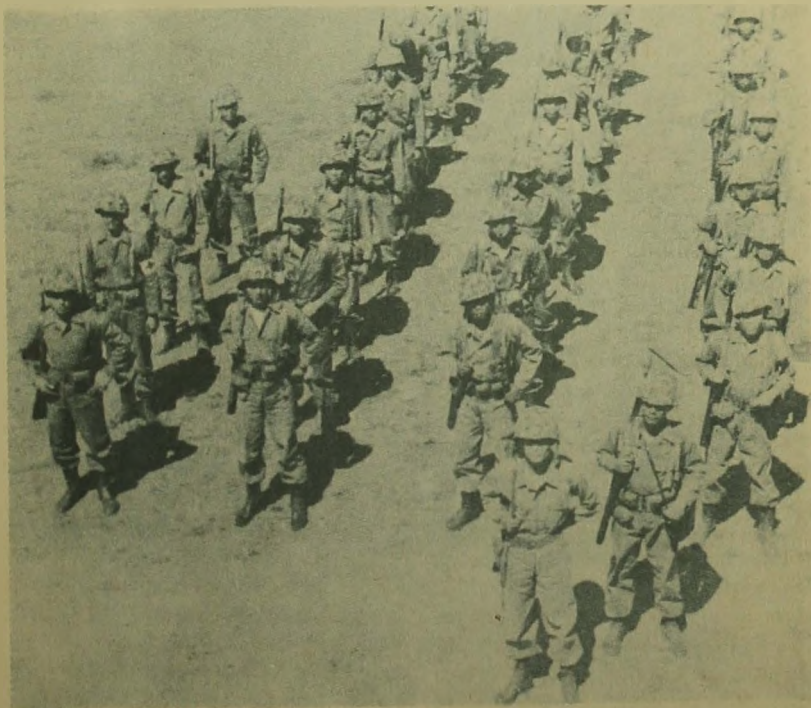
The country has a coastline measuring 11,440 miles and a water surface of no less than 700,000 square miles. An effective defense calls for efficient patrol work over these 700,000 square miles of water surface and sea lanes, which are the vital links between the islands. Undoubtedly, this calls for a fast and efficient navy.

### **Navy Needs More**

But a navy does not fight its wars on the seas alone. Warships are not its sole weapons. To exist afloat, a navy must maintain ac-

tivities ashore. It should be able to secure and defend shore installations. It should be able to deny the shores to the enemy and to dislodge any enemy which may have gained thereto. It should be able to disrupt enemy lines of supplies and communications, and neutralize, seize or destroy enemy bases and installations on hostile shores. These are jobs for fighting men — for marines. Marines are seaborne fighting men. They are a flexible and versatile force which has been in use since warships started sailing the seas.

*A group of marines await sailing orders to make an amphibious landing somewhere on the Luzon East Coast*





*The 1st Marine Company provided detachments for navy ships visiting Korea, Japan and North Borneo.*

They are an indispensable part of a fighting navy.

### **Not New**

The use of fighting men as part of the regular component of warships is not new. It was common to the Phoenecians and to all the maritime states of Greece at least five centuries before the Christian era. The marines of that day had definite tactical missions: first, to fight in naval engagements, defending the bulwarks of their own ships and conducting boarding parties against the ships of the enemy; second, to capture and

hold the land approaches of harbors when it was necessary for the fleet to sail into port in some strange country; and third, to enable the fleet to strike a blow on land by means of a raiding party or a small, compact offensive force.

The custom of using fighting soldiers aboard ships, coming down from the Greeks and Romans, were adopted by the English fleet, and from there by the other navies of Atlantic countries. The marines then were loosely organized groups of fighting men at sea. The



formal establishment of a compact English marines was done on October 28, 1664 when an Order in Council directed the organization of "The Admiral's Maritime Regiment."

The US Marine Corps as it exists today was formed by the US Congress Act of July 11, 1798, during the first stages of the naval war with France. The concept of marines did not start from the Mediterranean and the Atlantic alone. Wherever there was water to sail on and wars to fight in, sea-borne fighting forces were used. The Japanese and the Chinese used marines. So did the early Filipinos, who ravaged the early Spanish forts on Philippine soil by means of fast, aggressive raids launched from swift sailing *vintas*.

#### **Modern P.I. Marines**

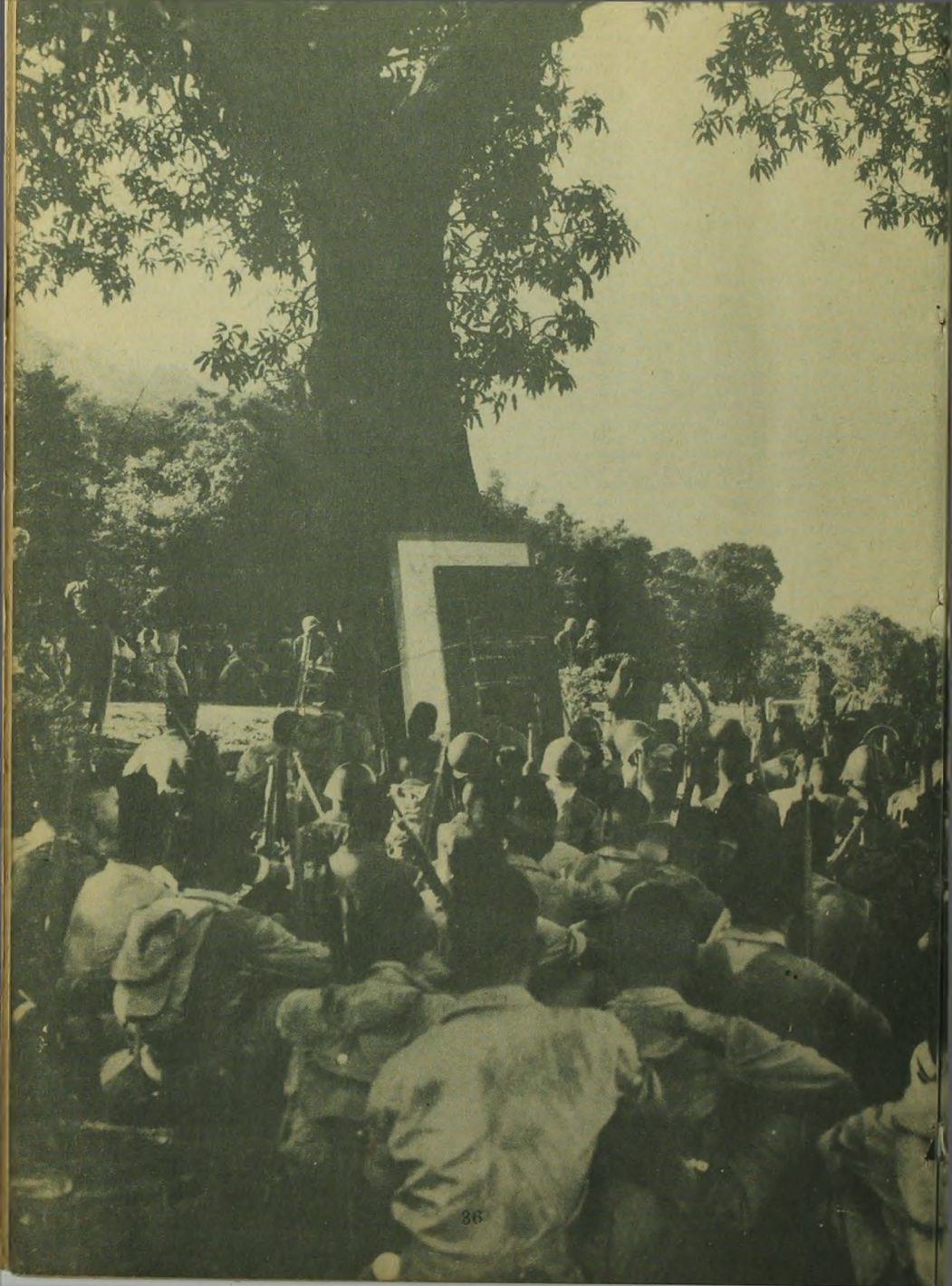
The present Philippine Navy Marine force was originally conceived in 1949 as a sea-borne striking force similar to other marine organizations in the world. It was designed to be the nucleus of the future Philippine Marine Corps. The Philippine Navy was given the mission of organizing, equipping, training, developing, and maintaining such a force out of its own authorized funds.

The present 1st Marine Company was activated as a unit of the AFP and assigned to the PN on November 2, 1950, by General Orders No. 319, HAFP, dated November 20, 1950. Basically, it was designated as "A" Company, 1st Marine Battalion, as there was

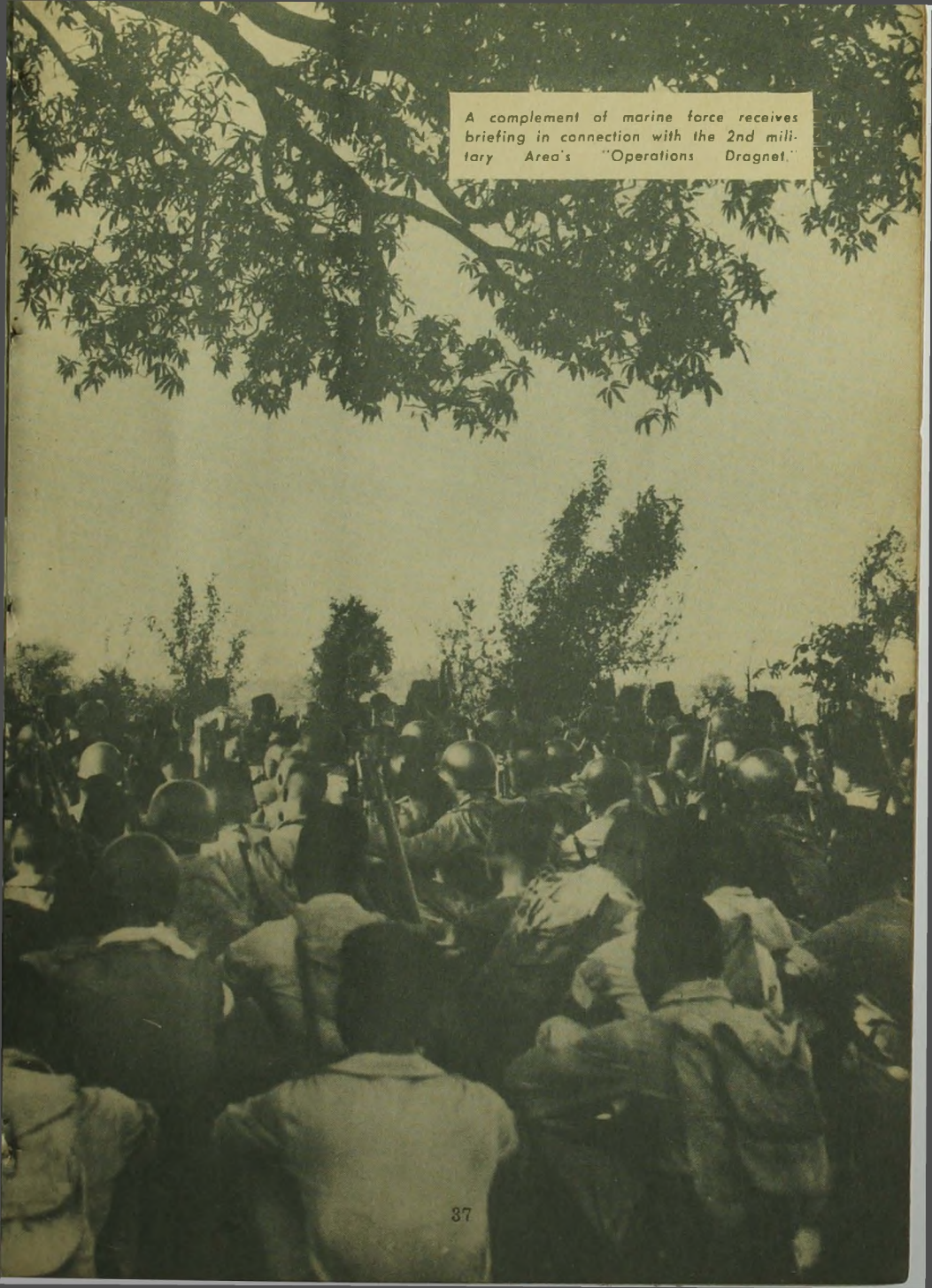
hope then that it will serve as a nucleus of a full-size marine battalion. When prospects for the activation of a battalion dimmed, it was redesignated as 1st Marine Company.

Almost immediately, organization of the 1st Marine Company commenced at Cavite Base in accordance with the approved Table of Organization dated November 1, 1950. Lt-Commander Manuel A. Gomez, PN, a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, the Off-Shore Patrol Training Center, and the Armored School at Fort Knox, Kentucky, was selected as the unit commander. Officers and key non-commissioned personnel were drawn from Navy units, while other enlisted personnel were selected from volunteer enlistees after a rigid and thorough screening. Training was started as soon as the company was organized and was carried out in spite of the fact that the company was continuously on the move from Cavite to Poro, La Union, and then to Manila during the first few months.

When the Philippine Naval Patrol was redesignated as the Philippine Navy on January 1, 1951, the 1st Marine Company became one of its major units. On March 12, 1951, the company was designated as a GHQ reserve and was given the mission of establishing security detachments for government offices and residences of government and diplomatic officials in Manila. The company also furnished detachments aboard







A complement of marine force receives briefing in connection with the 2nd military Area's "Operations Dragnet."



Aggressive raids from swift-sailing vintas were utilized by the marines in army operations against outlaws in Jolo, Sulu

ships, notably the *RPS APO*, which the President used when he visited North Borneo, and *LST 842*, which transported political prisoners then being tried in court.

#### **Combat Duty**

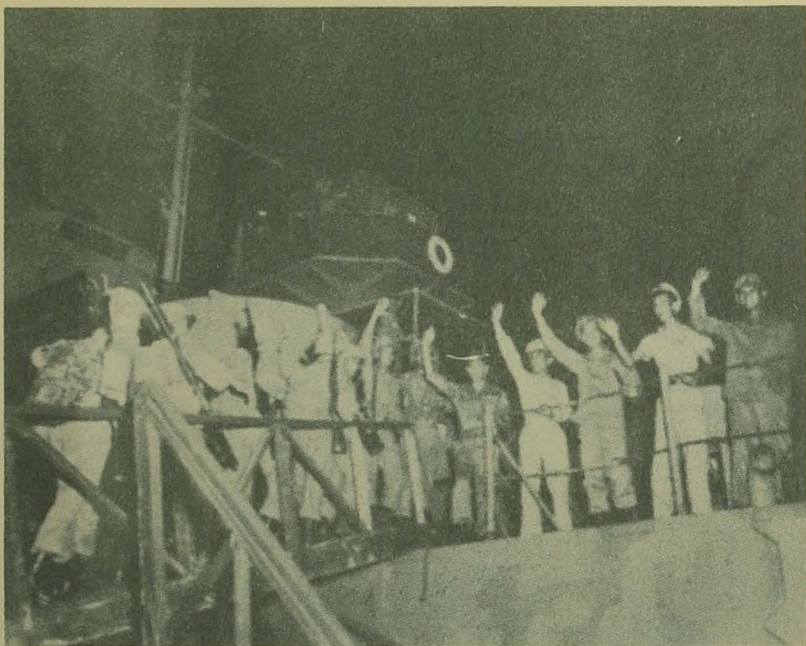
The company was called upon to take part for the first time in a major operations on April 19, 1951. It was assigned the mission of making an amphibious landing in force on the Luzon East Coast in connection with the 2nd Military Area's "Operations Dragnet" against the Huks. This was the beginning of the company's participation in the anti-dissident drive. Such participation was

characterized by constant movements from one part of the country to another. In a period of two years, the company has served in all the four military areas and in 18 separate provinces scattered all over the country.

On June 1951, the company had its first real encounter of combat when one of its patrols of platoon strength fought a Huk force, killed three, and wounded eleven of the dissidents near San Antonio, Nueva Ecija.

The company was formally presented to the nation when it marched with other AFP units during the 1951 Independence Day





*Leathernecks in full battle gear, including characteristic camouflaged helmets, embark for an operations against dissidents and outlaws.*

parade. The next day, it was airlifted to Legaspi, Albay, from which place it launched an amphibious raid at Catanduanes. Other activities during this period were connected with the operations in the Ragay Gulf Area, Nueva Ecija, Mindoro, La Union, Batanes and in the Luzon East Coast.

#### **Other Jobs**

The company hit the headlines when it was dispatched to the Visayas in 1951 to help insure free elections. It served in Cebu, Negros Oriental and Negros Occidental, where it conducted operations against dissidents and helped the Red Cross distribute relief

goods after storms, in addition to its election duty at the time.

Upon its return to Manila it was again designated as a GHQ reserve. It participated in several operations in Nueva Ecija, Tarlac, and the East Coast. It also provided detachments for navy ships visiting Korea, Japan and North Borneo.

From that time the unit has been tied down mostly with garrison duties in Manila and in the Sulu Sea Frontier with occasional participations in army operations against outlaws in Jolo. During this period the garrison detachments in Manila were given train-



ing under US Marine Corps training teams.

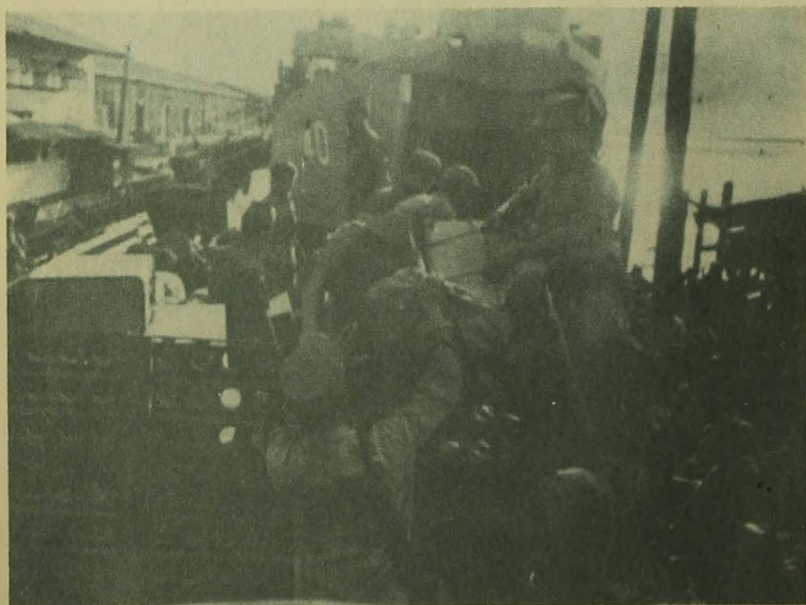
On October 1, 1951, Lt-Commander Manuel A Gomez turned over the command to Lt. (sg) Gregorio Lim, PN, a graduate of the Philippine Military Academy, the Off-Shore Patrol Training Center, the Infantry School at Fort Benning, Georgia, and the Marine Corps School at Quantico, Virginia.

The unit is presently maintaining garrison for the Sulu Sea Frontier and the Headquarters Philippine Navy. It has been as-

signed military police and honor escort duties at the PN Headquarters.

### Conclusion

In its five years of existence, the company has performed various duties which took it all over the Philippines from Batanes in the north to Sitankai in the south, and from Balabac island in the west to Catanduanes in the east. During the whole period, and in all of the operations it conducted, the company has proved its value and versatility.



*Marines are trained rigidly even in disembarkation work.*