



A RECORD OF SAFETY

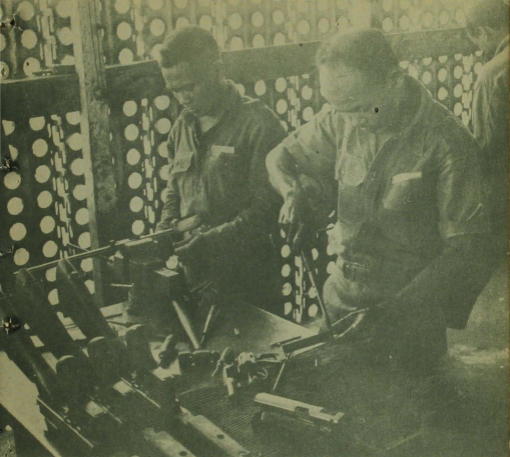
by the Military History Branch

Feared By Authorities to Bear a High Percentage of Casualties, the Maneuver of the 3rd Infantry Division Turned Out a Record of Safety Which Belied Manuals

THE LAST tactical war maneuver of the 3rd Division was, according to some observers, brilliantly executed. Held in Norzagaray, Bulacan, early in December last year, the maneuver, which included both artillery and air support, had the largest body of men ever to be put together by the

Armed Forces of the Philippines in an operation where live ammunition was used.

There had been an inevitable tenseness at the start of the battle. Strong speculations loomed in the air as to the percentage of casualties that would result from the action. Casualty can-



Ordnance men keep big guns as well as small ones in tip-top shape for ready use by AFP troops. Efficiency of Ordnance Service was among those responsible for absence of accidents in sham battles conducted by 3rd Division.

not be avoided in spite of strict precautions. Training manuals have it that ordinarily, up to 6% casualty can be expected from such maneuvers. However, when the battle ended and the last vestige of smoke had cleared away a thorough checking up was made, and the maneuver turned out to

be a record of safety. No casualty. More than that, no accidents! It may aptly be concluded that the success was due not only to the remarkable coordination among all the units participating in the maneuver and the thorough preparation of the battleground but also and largely to the efficient training the men who took part in



Among weapons used by trainees were 105 MM howitzers together with live shells properly serviced by Ordnance personnel. Effective logistics operation kept the big guns firing at imaginary enemy, four-division strong.

it have had before they were finally put to test for their proficiency in combat.

The simulated battle area, referred to as danger zone, is bounded on the west by the town of Sicaw, on the north by the town of Babatuan, on the south by the town of Lyang and the area two miles west of Babatuan. Because live 105 Howitzers were used and the assaulting troops were supported by the Philippine Air Force planes which dropped live bombs, all necessary precautions were made. The civilians who lived in and around the vicinity were taken care of. They were warned against getting in or near the battle zone. Those

who live in and around the maneuver areas had been cautioned to be quiet and avoid being panicky. They were assured that all precautionary measures to insure their safety had been taken. Civilian activities and traffic flow were not interfered with or hampered. Men, women, and children were warned not to touch any unexploded ammunition, shells and flares, and in case they found any, to report to the nearest army or police stations so that these may be disposed properly. Where damages to real property occurred as a result of the exercises the civilians concerned were advised to file at once their claims and report to the division head-



Supplies flowed steadily to the "front lines" by means of AFP Base Shop-repaired vehicles maintained by advance personnel of the Ordnance Service.

quarters at Fort William McKinley, Rizal.

The people, appreciative of the army's concern over their well-being, had been very cooperative. They did as they were told, and even went as far as offering what help they could extend to the army.

The tactical phase of the maneuver in the area began as soon as the troops, some 930 trainees and 45 officers of the 2nd battalion under Lt. Col. David Pelayo, had cleared the initial point of maneuvers which was the base camp for command, logistical, and administrative installations.

The assaulting troops actually constituted only one regiment in

maneuver, although for tactical purposes, the imaginary strength of the troops was two divisions, and the imaginary enemy had the strength of four divisions. Supported by PAF planes with cargoes of live bombs, the troops began their assault using live ammunition on December 8. It was so realistic that the observers, including foreign military personnel, breathlessly followed the movement and action. It was really a test in the proficiency of the AFP-trained 20-year-olds on all aspects of military operation phases like personnel, intelligence, operation, and logistics. Even the transfer of captured prisoners of war during the man-

euver was done in such precision that some observers could not help but utter words of praises as the mock war went on.

In a real war as in a simulated one like this maneuver, while the frontline roars with fire, explosives, and action, other units stay behind. And one of these is the Ordnance Service which, like other units, is kept very busy seeing to the steady flow of arms and ammunition, to the combat units. It is never less heroic in battle than the frontline units and the rest of the other units because much depend upon it whether in war or in peace, when the proper maintenance and storage of ordnance supplies and equipment of the Armed Forces is as vital the training of its manpower. Without

the ordnance, the army could be immobile, paralyzed. After the action, its bomb disposal squad clears every vestige of explosives to render the battle zone safe again.

For the efficient showing of the Ordnance Service during the 3rd Division tactical war maneuver, Brigadier General Alfonso Arellano, then Commanding General of the 3rd Division, at present Vice Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, in a letter of appreciation to Colonel Blas Alejandro, Ordnance Chief, wrote: "...More than I expected, you and your men have gone far beyond your normal call of duty so as to be able to furnish timely and adequate supply and mainten-

Precautionary measures were taken to obviate injury to trainees as well as civilians. Recoilless rifles and ammunition were test-fired before the maneuver, participated in by PAF planes which dropped live bombs.





A steady stream of ammunition moved to the front through the efforts of the Ordnance men, a group of whom are shown in photo above. Air-ground coordination is considered precise.

ance services to the 3rd Division, without which the training missions of this unit and the resulting combat preparedness of our troops could have been adversely affected. I need not mention specific examples of these fine accomplishments of your service for they are known to all. Nevertheless, I feel I shall be doing an injustice if I do not make specific mention, among others, that your personal attention and supervision which you unselfishly imposed upon yourself in promptly servicing MDAP vehicles and weapons made possible the adequate training of our 20-year-old trainees. The magnificent per-

formance of your Explosive Ordnance Disposal Squad, in clearing the site of both the Battalion Tests and Regimental Field Exercises of the 9th Infantry in Norzagaray, Bulacan, of explosives and other hazards to the life and limb of the participating troops both before and after the maneuvers, is also worthy of mention. I am sure that without this support, the thorough training of the 9th Infantry Regiment and the other units of the 3rd Division would not have been possible."

Chief of Staff of the Armed Forces, Lieutenant General Jesus Vargas, also took cognizance of the "splendid cooperation" the



Mock war was so realistic that observers, shown in photo above being briefed by Brig. Gen. Alfonso Arellano (standing) prior to the sham battles, later followed breathlessly the troop movement and action.

Ordnance Service accorded to the 3rd Division during the maneuver. "Under your leadership," General Vargas, in his letter of appreciation to Col. Alejandre said, "the personnel of the Ordnance Service demonstrated a high sense of devotion to duty and unstinted cooperation without which the tests and exercises would not have been a success."

Reports say that by June next year, the division command will

be ready to launch a full division mock exercises. It is expected that by that time, the 2nd regiment which has started training will be ripe for a tactical war maneuver. With the spirit the country's 20-year-olds take their training and with their proficient showing in time of action it is hoped that the next tactical war maneuver will be another record of safety.