

Horse Cavalry and National Defense

By Capt. Tomas C. Yquin

IN this age of the atomic bomb, the idea of employing horses in warfare is, to a lot of people, foolhardy. Their idea of horse cavalry is inevitably associated with King Arthur and the Knights of the Round Table. The horse, they claim, is definitely obsolete, and is, at best, good for parades and ceremonies — luxuries which the Philippines can ill-afford. However, there are some voices in the wilderness actually crying for the expansion of the 1st Cavalry Squadron of the Armed Forces of the Philippines, in the interest of national defense.

Some Lessons

Bataan is still fresh in the memory. The heroic stand of the defenders there evokes world-wide admiration. But there probably would have been less of that kind of Bataan had it not been for the existence and efficiency of the 26th U.S. Cavalry Regiment, which contributed in no small measure to the successful withdrawal of the USAFFE forces to their place of last stand. The 26th, which was a Philippine

Scout Regiment, lost more than half of its complement but successfully carried out its mission.

In his book, "Story of the U.S. Cavalry", Maj. Gen. John K. Kerr (retired), who was the last U.S. Chief of Cavalry, tells how the Germans in the last war changed their minds about the horses: "... the Soviet used horse cavalry to great advantage during the war; so the mechanized German Army was forced to return to the horse which it had previously eliminated, and to form, from 1943 to 1945, six mounted divisions in the field. Today the Russians are believed to have some twenty-five mounted divisions..."

Gen. Kerr also describes how, on November 1, 1950, Red Chinese horse cavalry attacked the "infantry-sized" 8th U.S. Cavalry Regiment in Unsan, Korea, completely surrounding one battalion and capturing 500 men. Then he goes on to mention other units which were nearly decimated by Red Guerrilla cavalry during the retreat from the Yalu River later that year. He also quotes Gen.

George S. Patton, who emerged as one of the most successful tank commanders of the last war, as saying, "Had we possessed an American Cavalry Division with packed artillery in Tunisia and Sicily, not a German would have escaped."

Not Obsolete

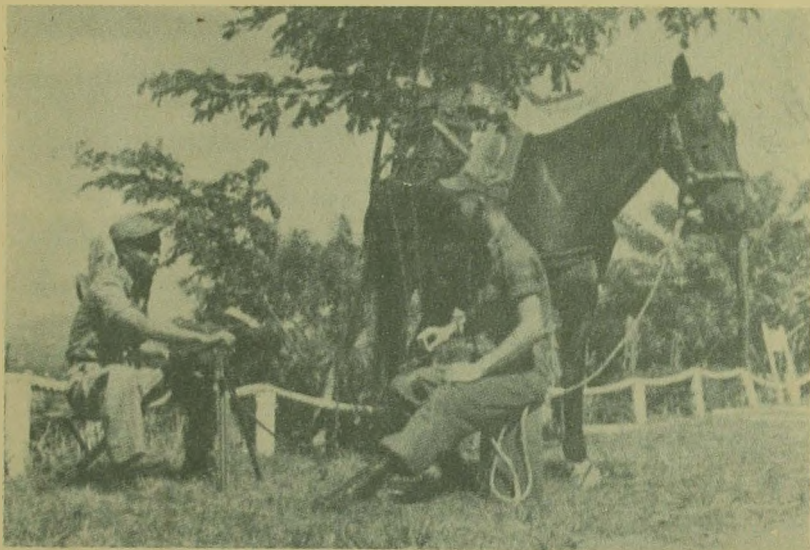
The horse still has its place in the fighting team even in this Atomic Age, as the old-fashioned foot soldier and his bayonet has. Cavalries are not obsolete. The cavalryman is, after all, only an

infantryman with his private "one horse power" transportation. The role of the horse is just to carry the foot soldier, his provision, weapons and equipment to the place where he is needed, with the least delay, preserving his energy up to the time close combat action prevails.

A reflective reading of the histories of wars reveals that a side is defeated because of its incapability to match the other side at a certain place and time in force. Our own forces could have made



A mounted trooper with his rifle, 3 basic load of ammunition, ration feeds for the horse, clothing and beddings, can cover an area four times that of a dismounted soldier and still fresh for hand-to-hand combat and can disperse faster



Above is a team of signal men with a complete set of radio on pack horse

the advance of the Japanese through the Cagayan Valley much more difficult and costly had they possessed sufficient mounted men to attack from uncanny points, from the flanks and from the rear, and keep away from highways that were risky due to enemy air superiority.

In case of enemy invasion today, the nation, dependent on others for war machines and fuel, could move her forces only if there were enough fuel stored, commensurate with her budgetary capability for a period of six months. After six months, considering that an invader would attempt, first of all, to exhaust the nation's fuel by landing on several points of the country, the defenders' mobility will suffer. This assumption is

premised on the ground that the enemy is not using her air power which she reserves for putting out the defenders' communications lines with their allies.

The defenders, with no more fuel and cut off from the sources, have a great need for a substitute means of transportation for moving their forces to the points of enemy landing. Hostilities can easily interrupt the flow of machine spare parts and fuel to the country. There is a great need for the nation to provide her ground forces with an alternate means of transportation to keep the Army going in such an eventuality.

Fit for Nuclear Warfare

The inception of nuclear weapons did not change the role of



Recoilless rifles and rocket launchers can be packed on horses. Note pack horse with two 60 MM mortars.

the soldier in war, except that he is required to move faster. Atomic explosions have to be exploited whether soldiers are on the offense or on the defense. When on the offense, soldiers have to take advantage of a nuclear explosion by closing in on the shocked enemy as soon as possible, just as they would after an artillery barrage. When on the defense, on the other hand, soldiers have to move away as soon as possible, just as they scene of an atomic burst and maneuver to outwit and outflank the enemy. Strategic use of nuclear weapons is successful only when ground forces take advantage

of it.

Horse cavalry will be very effective in atomic warfare due to its inherent mobility regardless of terrain features, weather, and road nets in the country. The accepted principle of defense in an atomic attack is dispersion. To depend on vehicles for dispersion will be disastrous because vehicles are road-bound and wheel trucks are visible from the air, enough to disclose the whereabouts of the troops. Aircraft as a means of dispersion of troops are also disadvantageous because of their need for camouflaged shelters which cannot be prepared in ad-

vance because their sites cannot be predicted in an atomic warfare. Besides, both vehicle and aircraft are expensive for the government and dependent on foreign-produced spare parts and fuel. The horses come in handy. Concealment for them is not a problem. Feeds for them can be grown in the country. The horses themselves can be bred and multiplied.

Not Expensive

Contrary to the belief of some military men, the horse cavalry is not expensive for our Armed Forces to maintain. The basis of the erroneous belief is that the horse gets a bigger daily allowance than the enlisted man. The horse, of course, has a bigger belly to fill up, but it should not be forgotten that the horse (1) does not receive salary, (2) is not entitled to quarters allowance, (3) does not go on furlough, (4) needs no clothing allowance, (5) receives no reenlistment bonus, (6) gets no retirement pay, (7) requires no burial expenses, and (8) does not leave any beneficiaries after death. The horse does not even get promoted. The landed cost of the mount of the 1st Cavalry Squadron acquired from Australia was around P500 each.

The cavalry is economical for the government. As a combatant arm of the ground forces organized principally to perform missions requiring great mobility and firepower, it can operate independently or in cooperation with other arms. It has been estimated, in our anti-dissident campaign,

that the efficiency of one mounted cavalryman is equivalent to that of four foot soldiers, in the sense that it takes at least four foot soldiers to cover the area covered by one mounted trooper. The cavalry can carry as a unit three basic loads of ammunition for all its weapons and three days' feed for horses and rations for the troops. A mounted unit can cover 12 miles an hour while a foot unit can cover only two and a half miles per hour. The cavalry can cross rivers unspanned by bridges. In an emergency it can cover 125 miles per day and carry with it all the weapons of an infantry, including ammunition.

For every Infantry Battalion, 800-1000 officers and men are needed, while for a Horse Cavalry Squadron, only 400-600 officers and men are needed. The overall maintenance expense of a Horse Cavalry Squadron will be very much less than that for two infantry battalions. This is so because the horses have no pay and allowances and other special needs.

In the Anti-Huk Drive

Even a part of the Philippine Constabulary can be mounted to bring the law to the remotest barrios and areas in the country with a tremendous saving in gasoline and vehicles. It cannot be denied that there are numberless barrios and settlements that are isolated from civilization, due to lack of roads. Mounted PC patrols can penetrate these areas to check lawlessness and bring the govern-

ment closer to the people. As the Huks learned, to their consternation, the cavalry has a habit of appearing from the most unexpected points.

The 1st Cavalry Squadron, although a very small unit, has proved conclusively the effectiveness of the horse in the Huk campaign. In "Operations Milagrosa", it demonstrated the kind of mobility required. The cavalry was employed in all sorts of missions. It was all over the place. The surrender of Luis Taruc can be attributed to, among others, the continuous harrassment effected by

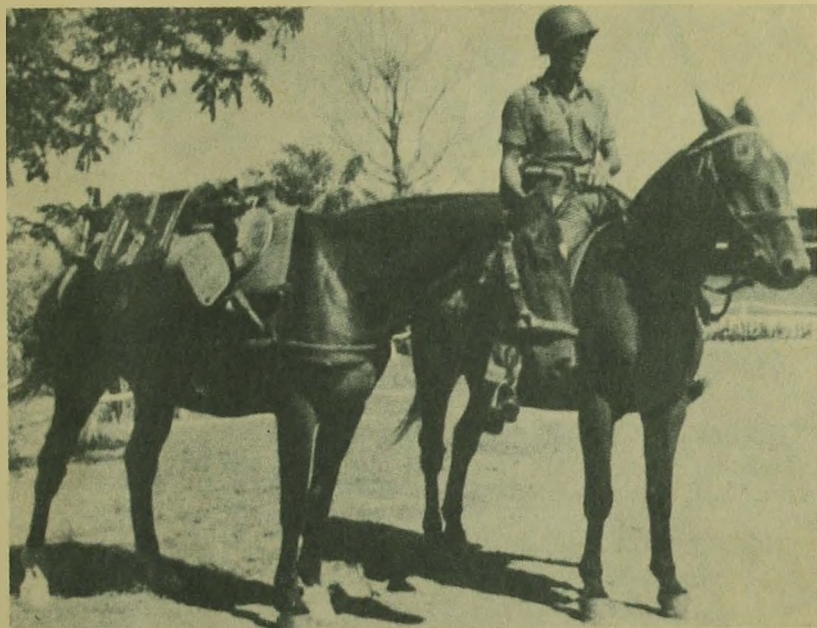
the cavalry. Thus it was that for its participation in "Operations Milagrosa", Brig. Gen. Manuel Cabal, then I MA Commander, commended highly the 1st Cavalry Squadron and awarded the Medal of Merit to its commander, Lt. Col. Jacobo Zobel.

Conclusion

The horse cavalry is not obsolete. It has specific and important roles to fulfill in battle. It is excellent for ground reconnaissance, screening wide fronts, exploiting an infantry "breakthrough", covering a retreat, supporting an offensive action, and covering ex-

The trooper and the pack mount with 250 lbs. of supplies, can travel 50-80 miles, regardless of weather, absence of roads and bridges and terrain conditions





Machine guns both light and heavy and BAR can be packed on horses. Above are two machine guns with four boxes of ammunition on both sides of the pack

posed flanks of an infantry.

Recent developments in the field of warfare, like the introduction of nuclear weapons, have enhanced rather than diminished the value of the cavalry. The cavalry, by keeping pace with developments, has not only retained its utility but also has increased its range and effectiveness. Although there are many fast means of transportation, none of them can completely replace the horse, which is suitable to mud, snow, and shell-shattered roads.

In peace time, the cavalry has the primary mission of operating, in conjunction with the PC units, to protect civilians against outlawry in the hinterlands not accessible to vehicles, and against

riots in cities and thickly-populated areas. The cavalry is ideal for the apprehension of cattle rustlers and outlaws, and for the reinforcement of municipal police forces.

Horses are the only means of troop transportation not immobilized by lack of imported fuel. If only for the reason that the Philippines is dependent on foreign sources for gasoline, horse cavalry should be employed as extensively as possible. One million pesos spent for the purchase of horses now might mean more than one billion pesos worth of vehicles without gasoline in wartime.

Horse power is still a source of mobile power necessary for an armed force in modern times.