

as directed to, over Highway 7 to Dinalupihan to prevent the withdrawal of enemy forces to Bataan Peninsula.

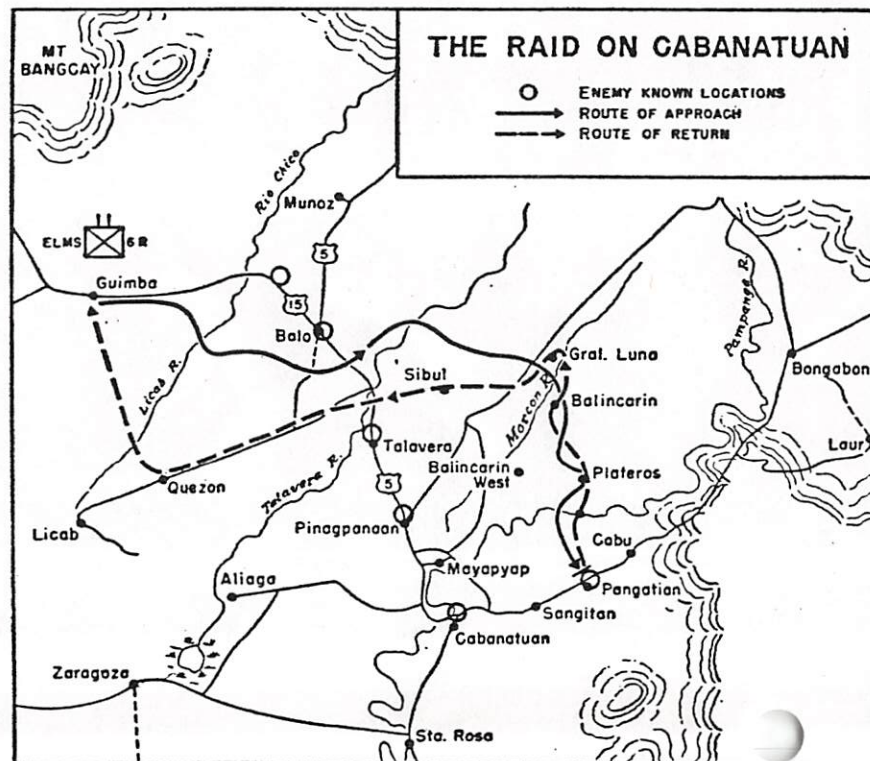
### Rescue of American POWs

*From down under to the top*  
*Gen. Walter Krueger*

Filipino guerrillas had reported to Headquarters Sixth Army on 27 January that the Japanese were holding between 300 and 500 American prisoners of war in a stockade at Pangatian, a few miles east of Cabanatuan, and that they were guarding them with only a small force. The prison camp was some twenty-five miles within the enemy lines, our most advanced troops, of the 6th Division, being at Guimba.

This information was immediately brought to my personal attention and I determined on prompt action to liberate those prisoners. Intelligence reports indicated that considerable enemy forces were being evacuated north through Cabanatuan to San José (Nueva Ecija), via Baloc or via Cabu and Rizal. So it was obvious that any rescue attempt would have to be kept absolutely secret and preceded by a careful reconnaissance. This reconnaissance was made by an Alamo Scouts team of 3 officers and 10 men, which set out from Guimba after nightfall on 27 January. Lieutenant Tom J. Rounsaville was the team leader, and Lieutenants William E. Nellist and John M. Dove were his assistant leaders.

The rescue mission was assigned to Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci (CO, 6th Ranger Battalion), who was ordered to furnish one reinforced company





for the purpose from his battalion. At 1400, 28 January, Company C and a platoon of Company F, both of that battalion—in all 5 officers and 115 men, under Colonel Mucci's direct command—moved out from Guimba on this mission. The force assembled before daylight on the 29th in the Balincarin area and there it was met by the Alamo Scouts team, which had not yet been able to obtain adequate information of the enemy strength and disposition in the prison-camp area. In view of this and information received from guerrillas that a large number of Japanese transient troops had been near Pangatian during the preceding night, Colonel Mucci postponed the rescue operation from the night of the 29th to that of the 30th.

On the morning of the 30th, while the bulk of the Alamo Scouts team located escape routes and arranged for bull-cart transportation for disabled prisoners, one officer and one man, guided by guerrillas, again reconnoitered the prison-stockade area. They found the stockade guarded by 73 officers and men. Also, some 150 transient troops were resting there during the day, and a force of about 800 Japanese with tanks and trucks was at Cabu. They also brought back complete information as to the size of the stockade, the location of sentry posts, hours of relief of the sentries, and the position and types of enemy defenses. Their reconnaissance had been greatly aided by aerial photographs furnished by the Air Forces of enemy installations in the entire Cabanatuan area. In the late afternoon of the 30th the whole Alamo Scouts team withdrew to Plateros, where the Rangers were to assemble for the jump-off.

The success of the enterprise depended upon secrecy and surprise. If the Japanese received any inkling of it they would probably massacre all the prisoners. Information of it was accordingly confided to very few persons, and coordination of effort was gained by briefing each member of the rescue force thoroughly on the plan as a whole and on his own particular task.

In order to avoid interference on the part of the 7,000 transient Japanese troops which Filipino guerrillas had reported at Cabanatuan and anticipating that they would probably start moving toward the east and north during the night of the 30th, Colonel Mucci decided to attack the stockade during the early evening of that day. In response to his request, Headquarters Sixth Army arranged for a night reconnaissance plane to cover the withdrawal route of the Rangers with orders to attack hostile tanks and trucks only, thus to slow up any armored or motorized pursuit. And besides this, two groups of guerrillas, each 60 strong and equipped with bazookas, were directed to establish roadblocks east and west of the stockade to keep enemy troops or armor from Cabanatuan and Cabu from interfering with the rescue operation.

The rescue force moved as far as Plateros (two miles north of Pangatian) during the daylight hours of the 30th. After nightfall, guided by Alamo Scouts, they moved to a final assembly point some 700 yards north of the stockade in readiness for their assault. The rescue force then attacked the stockade from three sides, the 2d Platoon of Company F initiating the action at 1945. While the Rangers attacked, the Alamo Scouts evacuated the prisoners.

The moment the firing started the prisoners were filled with apprehension. They feared their guards were about to kill them. They simply could not believe that the stockade was being attacked by American troops sent to rescue them. They were not, in fact, reassured on that score until the sounds of unmistakable American profanity penetrated the blackness of the night and convinced them that

friendly forces were at hand to release them from their captivity. By 2015, the rescue force had wiped out the Japanese guards at the stockade, as well as the 150 transient Japanese troops. And they had released every prisoner and begun to withdraw with them to Plateros, guerrillas covering the flanks and rear.

Everything had gone well so far but the withdrawal was yet to be accomplished. The tail of the rescue force had scarcely cleared the Pampanga River bridge, when some 800 Japanese, alerted by the firing, advanced to the roadblock which the guerrillas had established there. The guerrillas allowed them to approach within close range and then killed many of them with automatic-weapons and rifle fire. Japanese tanks then approached and opened fire, but made no attempt to cross the bridge, and the guerrilla force, which had lost 9 men in the encounter, withdrew an hour later.

The rescue force, convoying 512 liberated prisoners of war—100 of them disabled and transported on carabao carts—withdrew toward the north and at 0800 on the 31st reached Sibul. Here ambulances and trucks were waiting to transport the liberated prisoners to Guimba, where I met them and saw to it that they were given every attention. Most of them were in pitiable condition and could not realize that they were now actually safe.

This rescue operation was a brilliant success. Carefully planned, effectively reconnoitered by Alamo Scouts, daringly executed by the Rangers and guerrillas, the surprise achieved reflected great credit upon the officers and men involved. The Ranger force had lost 2 killed and 1 wounded; it inflicted over 200 casualties upon the enemy, exclusive of those exacted by the guerrillas at the Pampanga River bridge. On 3 March I decorated Colonel Mucci with the Distinguished Service Cross, many Rangers and Alamo Scouts with the Bronze Star Medal, for their performance in the rescue operation, and Colonel Horton V. White (G2, Sixth Army) with the Legion of Merit for his effective planning of that operation.

### The Final Advance on Manila

A plan for a two-pronged drive by XIV Corps against Manila had meanwhile taken shape. The 1st Cavalry Division, which would complete its concentration at Guimba by the end of January, was to form the left prong of that drive and one infantry division the right prong. The drive was to be supported by I Corps in the north, XI Corps in the east, as well as by a diversionary assault landing made at Nasugbu on 31 January, under control of Eighth Army, by the reinforced 11th Airborne Division, which was to operate against Tagaytay Ridge and northward toward Manila, but which did not come under my control until 10 February.

Field Order No. 46, putting the plan for the drive on Manila into effect, was issued on 30 January. This order assigned the 1st Cavalry Division and the 44th Tank Battalion (less one company) to XIV Corps; and it directed that corps to advance aggressively southward, moving with its left on 1 February to secure crossings over the Pampanga River and the line Malolos-Sibul Springs-Cabanatuan, and to be prepared to continue the advance to capture Manila. The order required XI Corps to advance vigorously eastward and establish and maintain contact with XIV Corps along the line Hermosa-Dinalupihan. I Corps was directed to continue its current missions, block the southward advance of enemy troops from Cagayan Valley and attack vigorously to the southeast on 1 February, capture San José and secure the line Cabanatuan (exclusive)-Bongabon-... (Nueva



C. Kinkaid); Fourteenth and Twentieth Air Forces; and Allied Air Forces, SWPA (Lieutenant General George C. Kenney).

The major combat units initially available to Sixth Army for the Luzon Campaign were:

I Corps (Major General Innis P. Swift)

6th Infantry Division (Major General Edwin D. Patrick)

43d Infantry Division (Major General Leonard F. Wing)

XIV Corps (Major General Oscar W. Griswold)

37th Infantry Division (Major General Robert S. Beightler)

40th Infantry Division (Major General Rapp Brush)

158th Infantry RCT (Brigadier General Hanford MacNider)

13th Armored Group (Colonel Marcus E. Jones)

Army Reserve (initially afloat)

25th Infantry Division (Major General Charles L. Mullins, Jr.)

Army Reserve (on Leyte)

11th Airborne Division (Major General Joseph M. Swing)<sup>1</sup>

The initial over-all combat strength of Sixth Army, exclusive of the 11th Airborne Division, was 152,447 officers and men, but the total force to be transported to the objective area and landed and supplied there was 203,608. Of this number, 32,577 belonged to ASCOM, 15,592 to Allied Air Forces, and 2,992 to Naval Service Command.

Since GHQ intelligence sources originally estimated the enemy's Luzon garrison at 150,000, the indicated combat strength of Sixth Army was considered adequate for the operation. Besides, a larger force could not have been initially transported to the objective area with the shipping available. But when it developed that the enemy actually had 235,000 troops on Luzon (even this was a considerable underestimate) the CinC on 19 December added the following units to the Sixth Army troop list, with dates of arrival in the objective area as indicated:

1st Cavalry Division	S plus 18 (27 January)
112th Cavalry RCT	S plus 18 (27 January)
32d Infantry Division, reinforced	S plus 18 (27 January)
33d Infantry Division, reinforced	S plus 30 (8 February)
41st Infantry Division, reinforced	S plus 32 (10 February)

The last two divisions were originally in GHQ reserve.

Sixth Army's basic tactical and general logistical plans were completed in time for me to approve them just prior to leaving Hollekang on 14 October 1944 for Leyte. A great deal of detailed logistical planning remained to be done, however, and had to be done fast. To that end, a special planning group composed of Colonel Kenneth Pierce (Deputy Chief of Staff, Sixth Army) and representatives of the staff sections was left behind at Hollekang until 11 November where it could work undisturbed by the tactical exigencies of the Leyte operation. It could also confer readily and frequently with the rear echelon of GHQ and the headquarters of Allied Naval and Air Forces, all at Hollandia.

This planning group, in collaboration with representatives of Allied Naval Forces, allotted shipping to each corps of Sixth Army and developed a shipping schedule tailored to the tactical and logistical requirements of the campaign. According to the capacity of the landing beaches and the amphibian shipping, sufficient lift was assigned to the two corps so each could land on S-day the equivalent of two reinforced divisions, each less one RCT. The schedule further provided for landing on S plus 1 elements of each remaining RCT and additional corps troops and supporting units.

A special staff section set up at the Sixth Army CP on Leyte was charged with

<sup>1</sup> The initial Sixth Army field order for the Luzon Campaign contained tentative provisions for the employment of this division, but these were eliminated by an amendment when GHQ removed the division from the troop list on 1 December