

HEADQUARTERS  
20TH AMPHIBIAN TRACTOR BATTALION  
APO 895

**RESTRICTED**  
DOWNGRADED TO:  
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BY AUTHORITY OF TAG *ewb*  
31 December 1944

SUBJECT: Operations Report

*2 Apr 46* \_\_\_\_\_ *HSD*  
Date Initials

TO : COMMANDING GENERAL XIV CORPS (Thru Channels)

I. NARRATIVE REPORT.

On 15 August 1944 this organization arrived at KORO HEAD T.R. at the Amphibian Training Centre. On the day of arrival, the Battalion was informed of its attachment to the 96th Infantry Division for a pending operation which was to be executed within a few weeks.

Several days after the arrival of the Battalion, 77 LVT MK 4's, 15 LVT MK 4's and 14 LVT MK A2's were drawn and immediately the Battalion began making plans for the operation, drawing equipment, modifying, clearing and maintaining its vehicles.

Plans for the operation were drawn up at joint meetings of the Naval Flotilla Staff, 96th Division Staff and this Battalion Staff.

On 31 August 1944 the Battalion loaded its personnel and equipment aboard LVT's for practice landing at MAUI ISLAND, during this practice, deficiencies were corrected, and experience gained. One LVT was lost.

The organization returned to KORO HEAD on 7 September 1944, replaced and cleaned equipment and further briefed troops, then, on 10 September 1944 again loaded personnel and equipment aboard nine LVT's enroute to staging area which was to be SHIMSTOCK in the MARSHALL ISLANDS.

Convoy arrived at SHIMSTOCK 25 September 1944 and various meetings were held aboard Command AP's to discuss plans and iron out difficulties. Convoy left SHIMSTOCK 26 September 1944 after one day stop to resupply vessels. After leaving SHIMSTOCK the Battalion was informed of change in target. The convoy next stopped at MANE in the ADMIRALTY ISLANDS where new target was revealed. Battalion revised plans and issued new orders although transported troops were not radically changed. Assault troops were loaded on LVT's from AP's and on the 11 October 1944 convoy left MANE enroute to target which was to be LEYTE ISLAND in the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS. Maps were drawn and distributed and troops further briefed while enroute to target.

The Battalion disembarked from LVT's and landed assault troops in eight waves at FIVE HOUR on ABLE Day which was 1000 20 October 1944. Company A transported BLT 382/2 and landed on BEACH BLUE ONE, Company B transported BLT 382/3 and landed on BEACH BLUE TWO, both BLT's were part of 382 ROT of the 96th Infantry Division. Immediately after landing assault waves, the Battalion passed to control of 1122d Engineer Co and operated under Beachmaster, hauling supplies from ship to shore and from shore inland to front line units as far as six miles, due to poor road conditions.

Battalion reverted to control of 20th Armored Group upon relief from attachment to 96th Infantry Division on 29 October 1944 per FO 11 HQ XXIV CORPS dated 27 October 1944 and continued hauling supplies, equipment and personnel under 20th Armored Group control.

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At 0245 27 Nov 44 a Jap transport plane landed approximately 25 yards offshore in vicinity Officers tents. It repelled enemy attack killing two Japs and capturing a marked map which proved very valuable in future operations.

## 2. SUMMARY OF INFORMATION.

### a. LOADING.

(1) Staging Area facilities available.  
(a) No changes in loading of either personnel or equipment of this installation made in staging area.

(2) Adequacy of loading equipment for supplies and personnel.  
(a) None used - LVT's loaded with organizational equipment, etc. by hand. Vehicles with equipment and personnel loaded by driver from shore to tank deck of LVT's.

(3) Palletization.  
(a) LVT's are not suited for handling all palletized equipment or supplies. Supplies such as ammunition when palletized are often of excessive weight. In addition LVT's are not constructed to enable them to tow pallets along beach.

(4) Method and Technique.  
(a) Transport Quartermasters supervised loading calling for supplies listed on cargo manifests and Vehicle Priority tables submitted by organizations. Upon call of TPs's battalions transported supplies and equipment by T/S vehicles to loading pier. Personnel loaded aboard by LVT's.  
(b) Difficulties encountered and suggested remedies.

(a) Amphibian Tractor Bns are not sufficiently equipped with Officers so that higher Hq can call on them for TPs's. This Bn, with the short time allotted to make ready for the operation lost five Platoon Leaders as TPs's which demanded the major portion of their time. As a result necessary supervision of work, briefing of men, etc. fell to remaining Officers who had full time tasks with their own men. In addition the Officers cannot remain on LVT's to supervise work of unloading priority material because they are needed with their platoons.  
Suggested Remedy: Utilization of overhead installation Officers as TPs.

(b) Difficulties in command while aboard ship were encountered due to splitting of platoons among several LVT's. This is a hardship on Platoon Officers. Platoons and Platoon Ldrs should remain together as far as possible to facilitate control.  
Suggested Remedy: LVT's are so constructed as to provide room on tank decks for 17 LVT and on main deck for 10 LVT. For long journeys Amphibian Tractor Platoon should be loaded on Tank Deck (10 LVT) plus one Command LVT from Bn Hq. Thus two Bns could be transported on 6 LVT's. For short journeys - Amphibian Tractor should be loaded on Tank and Main decks thus transporting 2 Bns on 4 LVT's. In either case this would result in consolidation of Bn thus facilitating command control and supervision.

(c) Higher Hq, when drafting plans for an operation should have an LVT advisor and liaison officer. Almost without exception, using arms have little or no idea of the capabilities and

Limitation of LVT's or a clear idea of their possibilities, weight and volume capacities are not fully understood or utilized.

- (d) Loading on LST with LVT is a slow process if all LVT's back on. This is especially noticeable when unloading supplies after initial waves have been carried in.

Suggested Remedy: First 14 LVT's drive on bow first and turn on tank deck. The last three LVT's can back on. In unloading, inasmuch as only a section of LVT's unloads at one time (moving cargo from LST to beach) the unloading LVT's should all drive on bow first, load and back off. If distance permits, this procedure can be followed and would cut loading time considerably.

b. UNLOADING.

(1) Shore Party Operations.

- (a) Beachmaster either does not properly control his unloading personnel or has insufficient help. Approximately 50% of incoming loads and outgoing loads to and from beach dumps were loaded and unloaded by tractor personnel. This results in unnecessary loss of time and time up vehicles unnecessarily. A difficult situation arose on this operation with every individual who needed transportation trying to find an individual tractor for his own needs. All requests for LVT should go through control vessel or Beachmaster who has Liaison Officer from LVT BN with him. If request is approved in. Off. request LVT from BN who will dispatch same. All personnel should be advised that no request will be honored unless approved by Control Vessel or Beachmaster, whichever is operating.

(2) Selective discharge of personnel and equipment.

- (a) No comment.

(3) Clearance of Beaches.

- (a) Beach dumps to be properly marked and traffic lanes in and out clearly defined. Small boat loads to be immediately moved from waters edge to proper dump. Whenever possible load directly from small boat into LVT, or if palletized, dragged by caterpillar tractors to correct dump.

(4) Movement of cargo to dispersal areas inland.

- (a) Again lanes for traffic should be clearly defined and installed as early as possible for rapid dispersal.

(5) Loss and Damage.

- (a) Great amount of loss and damage to equipment and supplies due to lack of prior instruction in unloading and handling of crates and boxes and carelessness. Quantities of material damaged or destroyed by being dropped at waters edge at low tide and failure to remove same before high tide.
- (b) Some damage to material due to obstruction of landing beaches by small boats carelessly dumping equipment ashore.

(6) Adequacy of unloading facilities.

- (a) Unloading facilities inadequate and simple expedients not used. Building of dirt ramps in front of LST bow ramps would eliminate difficulties in unloading vehicles.
- (b) Insufficient personnel at landing beaches and at beach dumps to handle incoming and outgoing loads.

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(7) Effect of Pollution.

- (a) LVT are not satisfactory for towing pallets.

c. RECONSTRUCTION.

(1) Ground.

- (a) Prior reconstructions failed to show enemy ground immediately inland or tank barriers on beaches.  
(b) Areas allotted to bivouac Amphibian Tractor Bn were too small for proper dispersal and necessitated companies being scattered at different points along beach.

(2) Water.

- (a) Adequate.

(3) Aerial.

- (a) LVTs 1/25,000 furnished this Bn were worthless.

d. SECURITY.

(1) Rear Areas incl OP's and rear echelon establishments.

- (a) No discernible beach defense plan or organized warning system throughout beach until approximately A plus 5 when Bn was incorporated into beach defense and eventually into perimeter defense of Corps Service Area.

(2) Forward Areas.

- (a) No comment.

(3) Local security - attacking echelon.

- (a) Ground security satisfactory.

(4) Security lines of communication.

- (a) No comment.

(5) Night security measures.

- (a) Local security, perimeter defense within companies and Bn, necessary outposts.

e. SPECIAL AND EXPLOITATION.

(1) Formations used.

- (a) Attack on beach made in lines of eight vehicles, eight waves on each beach. Time interval as follows:

Bank Wave	JIG H III
1st Trac Wave	JIG plus 1
(30 yr interval)	
2d Trac Wave	JIG plus 3
3d Trac Wave	JIG plus 6
4th Trac Wave	JIG plus 11
5th Trac Wave	JIG plus 16
6th Trac Wave	JIG plus 21
7th Trac Wave	JIG plus 26
8th Trac Wave	In Call.

(2) Use of supporting Infantry firms of automatic weapons.

- (a) On initial landing transported Infantry assisted on P/T waves.

(3) Use of supporting Artillery fire.

- (a) No comment.

(4) Use of attack and bombardment aviation in support of ground troops.

- (a) No comment.

(5) Night operations.

- (a) Ship to shore unloading throughout night hours.

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(b) When Naval vessels employ searchscreen at night, LVT should be warned out of the water due to danger of collision and impossibility of rendering assistance to vehicles in trouble due to obstructed view.

(6) Naval gunfire.

(a) Little or no effect on anti-tank obstacles on beach or on wire entanglements on beach.

**f. SUPPLEMENTALS AND LIAISON**

(1) Air-ground - no comment.

(2) Ship-to-shore.

(a) In line Officer on board control vessel received request for LVT from Naval Control Officer and from LVT Officers on liaison with beachmasters. (b 3-3) aboard control vessel dispatched LVT through an HQ ashore by radio to designated unloading points.

(b) However due to numberless requests directly made to individual vehicles and to company commanders, not through line Officers accurate tally of vehicles being used and those on hand were impossible to maintain.

(3) Adequacy of T/O and T/S of Communication Equipment and Radio Personnel.

(a) SN needs 7 additional radio sets (20-50) to supplement vehicular sets and for use by liaison Officers which this SN is called upon to furnish.

**g. RATIONS.**

(1) Type of rations suitable for operations in this area.

(a) 10 in 1, 0 or K ration initially and B ration with arrival of organizational stoves and kitchen equipment plus materials for flyproof kitchens.

(2) Use of field kitchens by advancing units.

(a) No comment.

(3) Individual clothing and equipment.

(a) recommend all personnel be equipped with either jungle boots or better, the Boot Combat, reversible upper due to amount of swamp and jungle patrolling which must be done.

(b) recommend issue of trousers, wet weather for use in conjunction with poncho.

(4) Methods of supply for front line troops.

(a) Supply to front line units initially accomplished by LVT of this organization due to the fact that roads were impassable to all other types of vehicles.

**h. THE WRECKER.**

(1) Use of Motor Vehicles.

(a) No motor transportation until approximately A plus 3 at which time the following T/S equipment was unloaded from ships: One 10 ton wrecker which was used by maintenance section to service vehicles; one 2 1/2 ton truck which was used by supply section to haul water and rations; two 1 ton trucks used for messenger and miscellaneous services.

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(2) Water

(a) All water borne traffic handled by P/S LVT Equipment.

(3) Hand Carry.

(a) No comment.

1. **EVACUATION.**

(1) How accomplished.

(a) During initial landing and casualty evacuated immediately from LVT to small boat and then to hospital barge.

(b) After Aid Station established where casualties were evacuated by a  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton truck when roads were passable to wheeled vehicles.  $\frac{1}{2}$  ton vehicle was placed inside LVT when beaches and water were to be crossed.

(2) Method most effective.

(a) Above method found most effective.

(3) Optimum length of time for troops to remain in attacking echelon.

(a) No comment.

1. **DEFENSIVE CAPABILITY.**

(1) Beach defense.

(a) Perimeter guard of beaches set up by using LVT either dug in or in some defilement when possible, coupled with dismounted gun positions.

(2) Temporary defense during combat.

(a) Consisted wholly of defense against infiltration and sniper fire inasmuch as this battalion was not subjected to a major attack in force.

1. **INTELIGENCE.**

(1) Most successful means of obtaining combat intelligence.

(a) Not applicable in rear areas. All intelligence information initially gleaned from maps and publications of higher echelons.

(2) Information gained from prisoners.

(a) None.

(3) Counter Intelligence measures.

(a) Normal SOP measures such as sign and countersign, light discipline at night after initial days in which lights were used except during Red Alert, prohibition of display of white clothing, etc.

1. **EFFECTIVENESS OF WEAPONS.**

In given insufficient opportunity to determine effectiveness of weapons or fire due to lack of opposition on initial landing.

1. **Relief of front line units.**

No comment.

1. **DEFICIENCIES IN TRAINING.**

More training time should be spent on actual ship to shore operations, handling of cargo and organization of beaches.

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**C. DEFICIENCIES IN EQUIPMENT.**

- (1) LVT #11 is of little value in movement of supplies.
- (2) Batteries in LVT are unsatisfactory for radio communication necessitating constant running of motors to maintain charge.
- (3) Sprocket stud bolts on LVT should be increased from 3/4 inch diameter to 1 inch diameter to prevent shearing.
- (4) LVT should be equipped with an auxiliary bilge pump to keep vehicles afloat in case of engine failure.

**D. OBSTACLES TO BE ENDED, ATTACK AND DEFENSE.**

NO comment. LVT's were unable to penetrate tank barriers found on beach.

**E. MEDICAL.**

- (1) Mosquitoes and flies appear to be the chief health hazards. A mild epidemic of Dengue Fever has prevailed in the face of strict anti-mosquito measures. No case of malaria has occurred, a daily dose of malarine explained the absence of this fever however. A mild epidemic of diarrhea has occurred, the average duration of the disease being two days. Most cases were afebrile. Epidemic is under control.

**F. GROUND EQUIPMENT.**

- (1) Adequacy of present T/A and T/S
  - (a) Recommend the following equipment either be added to present T/A or authorized as excess.
    - 1. 112 Haulin, canvas, 16 x 30 feet (one per LVT).
    - 2. 7 radio sets SCR-500 (additional)
    - 3. Vehicle M-20 Reasel (three - one per co.)
    - 4. 14 Truck Amphibian 2 1/2 ton units to replace Truck 2 1/2 ton 6x6 cargo.
    - 5. Replace wrecker 10 ton M1 with a Tank Recovery Vehicle.
    - 6. One machine duplicating mimeograph.
- (2) Excess equipment carried and needed.
  - (a) NO excess equipment carried.
- (3) Unnecessary equipment.
  - (a) Recommend the following material be deleted from present T/A/S.
    - 1. Two Camouflage equipment sets NO. 3 General Purpose.
    - 2. All Camouflage nets.
    - 3. Passible equipment NO-50.
    - 4. All vehicular compasses.

**G. RECOMMENDATIONS.**

- (1) Definite information of the type of beach defenses should be obtained prior to landing and a planned breakdown of beach fortifications included in orders. A detailed plan for breakdown of tank barriers has been submitted to 20th Armored Group by this battalion under separate cover.

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- (2) A detailed plan of beach dumps, traffic circulation, transportation and manpower assignments for ship to shore and shore to ship movement should be disseminated to all affected personnel.
- (3) All LVT's should have a gasoline motor of sufficient size to charge batteries and operate bilge pumps in emergencies.

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Lt. Col., USMC,  
Commanding.

Appendix:

1. Unit Journal.
2. Intell. & Op. Journal.
3. Supply Journal.