



Invictus: The Long Patrol and the Indomitable 2nd Marine Raider Battalion

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Invictus: The Long Patrol and the Indomitable 2nd Marine Raider Battalion

Douglas D. White

A Thesis in the Field of History
for the Degree of Master of Liberal Arts in Extension Studies

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Abstract

Between November 4th and December 4th, 1942, the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion embarked on a mission called the Long Patrol. The purpose of this mission was to use unconventional tactics to attack the Imperial Japanese forces. Unfortunately, the battalion suffered greatly from disease, injuries, and death during the mission, which made them combat ineffective for a long time. It is important to analyze this event to better prepare for similar critical decisions in the future. First Lieutenant Cleland E. Early, part of Company E, complained that the living conditions were even worse than the combat. Even those who survived the combat unscathed could not escape the diseases. While the Long Patrol did contribute to the overall success of the Guadalcanal campaign, the high cost of force readiness and health raises questions about whether such a heavy toll could have been avoided while still achieving success. This thesis aims to examine the creation of the 2nd Raider Battalion and the conduct of the Long Patrol, then explore the impact of nutrition, hygiene, and disease on the battalion as they recovered and prepared for their next combat engagement.

Frontispiece



Members of the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion (Carlson's Raiders) on their Long Patrol. In the foreground are Native Scouts, which provided substantial value to the Raiders and Marines on the island. (Photo, World War II - Guadalcanal and Guam 1942)

Author's Biographical Sketch

Douglas White is an officer in the United States Marine Corps, specializing in logistics. He developed his interest in Raider history while serving with the 1st Marine Raider Support Battalion, a unit that provides combat service support to the 1st Marine Raider Battalion. Douglas has a Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Utah Valley University, where he graduated Cum Laude. Prior to joining the Marines, he spent six years enlisted in the Utah Army National Guard as a field artillery Fire Directional Specialist. Douglas has also completed two combat deployments to Iraq. His institutional and practical knowledge has given him experience in combat and sustaining combat troops, which provides particular insight into military history and tactics. In his current assignment with the Marine Corps, Douglas is focused on contributing to maritime expeditionary warfare and strategy at Headquarters Marine Corps.

Dedication

I would like to acknowledge and express my gratitude towards all the individuals who have helped and supported me throughout the journey of writing this thesis. I dedicate this thesis to all of them who have helped me in so many ways and played a significant role through years of education in improving a flawed writer. Dr. Kat Brown, my first history professor at Utah Valley University, was instrumental in igniting my passion for history within academia. Kurt Ziebarth, or “Z”, educated me on the U.S. Navy and naval tactics and provided immense help in the writing process.

I am grateful to my parents, Darrell and Ludean, who took the time to review drafts and provided a lay perspective. Travis, with his analytical mind, helped me with the structure and content of the thesis. My kids were understanding and supportive throughout the long hours of research and writing, with only the occasional interruption. A heartfelt thank you to my wife, Angela, for her unwavering support and belief in me. I am forever grateful for your love and companionship.

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I would like to express my gratitude and appreciation to my thesis director, Dr. Donald Ostrowski, for his unwavering support and guidance throughout the process. His early direction helped me get my thesis on track, then continued guidance helped me stay on track. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to work with him.

I also want to thank the staff at the Historical Reference Branch, Marine Corps History Division, and the Archives and Special Collections at the Alfred M. Gray Research Center for going above and beyond to assist me in finding the necessary materials.

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Chapter I.

Introduction

*Who, whether praise of him must walk the earth Forever, and to noble
deeds give birth, Or he must fall to sleep without his fame, And leave a
dead unprofitable name-Finds comfort in himself and in his cause; And
while the mortal mist is gathering, draws His breath in confidence of
Heaven's applause: This is the happy Warrior; this is He That every
man in arms should wish to be.*¹

—William Wordsworth

The 2nd Marine Raider Battalion and the Long Patrol were crucial elements in the broader Guadalcanal Campaign. They contributed to the Marine's success in the first offensive action in the Pacific during World War II. The impact of the Guadalcanal Campaign was noteworthy for its strategic implications and effects on the air and naval power in the region. Sustaining air and naval power contributed to the overall U.S. "island hopping" strategy toward Japan. The Allies' success in securing Guadalcanal set the stage for further offensives and ultimately contributed to the eventual Allied victory in the Pacific theater of the Second World War. One critical component of the United States forces achieving such success was the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion (Carlson's Raiders, named after their first commander, Lieutenant Colonel Evans Carlson), which

¹ Rufus W. Griswold, *The Poets and Poetry of England: in the Nineteenth Century* (Philadelphia: Carey & Hart, 1846), 55.

conducted a 30-day “Long Patrol” behind enemy lines. The Marines on Guadalcanal received many benefits from the patrol, including intelligence, the disruption of Imperial Japanese Army operations, and a boost to Allied morale. The Long Patrol played a considerable role in the eventual success of the Guadalcanal Offensive, which marked a distinct and positive turning point in the Pacific War.

While initially unsure of the goal behind the United States attack on Guadalcanal and considering it a possible feint, the Imperial Japanese Army and Navy eventually felt a strong sense of urgency about the Guadalcanal campaign. The commanding general of the Imperial Japanese Army Sendai Division communicated to his men before they assaulted the Marine positions around Henderson Field on 22 October 1942, “This is the decisive battle between Japan and the United States in which the rise or fall of the Japanese Empire will be decided. If we do not succeed in the occupation of these islands, no one should expect to return alive to Japan. We must overcome the hardship caused by the lack of material and push on unendingly by displaying invincible teamwork. Hit the proud enemy with an iron fist so he will not be able to rise again.”² Members of the Sendai Division would face Carlson’s Raiders during the Long Patrol.

While Carlson’s Raiders would duel with the Imperial Japanese forces on the island, the primary enemy of all involved was the island’s environment. As stated by Alex Douville, “Whether the extreme cold of a Russian winter, the intense heat of the Sahara desert, or the oppressive Jungles of the Pacific, the conditions in which a soldier or Marine has to fight have a significant impact on his morale, health, and fighting

² John F. Wukovits, *American Commando: Evans Carlson, His WWII Marine Raiders, and America's First Special Forces Mission* (New York: NAL Caliber, 2009), 178.

ability.”³ Guadalcanal contained many formidable environmental obstacles. The 2nd Marine Raiders overcame this and other challenges to emerge intact on 4 December 1942 after 30 days in the jungle. However, there were many consequences of the Long Patrol. The patrol meant “battling Guadalcanal itself: smothering foliage, wearisome heat and humidity, vermin, and especially disease: malaria, jaundice, dysentery, and ‘jungle rot’ as some Marines called ringworm.”⁴ Many Raiders were sick and malnourished. Examining the 2nd Raider Battalion, how the battalion was created, why it was best suited for the Long Patrol, and its actions on the Long Patrol conveys the extreme difficulties of the operation. Yet further analysis of the diseases and challenges that emerged, what the battalion required during recovery, and its preparation for following combat actions convey some of the mistakes. The Raiders would suffer more from disease than the actions of the enemy while in the jungles of Guadalcanal.

The Guadalcanal campaign was strategically crucial to the Pacific and U.S. war effort in keeping the sea lanes to Australia open. The 2nd Raiders were a specialized unit developed for missions like the Long Patrol. The patrol had an outsized impact for the size of the force on the outcome of the battle for the island. The struggle would provide valuable lessons in conducting unconventional warfare and was vital in halting Japanese expansion in the Pacific. The investment in training and personnel was necessary to achieve positive results in a critical campaign. Elite units require time to find the right Marines, conduct the necessary training, and then congeal as a unit, making the 2nd Raiders a highly valuable combat commodity. The preservation of the force of this finite

³ Alex J. Douville, “The ‘Barbarization’ of Warfare in the Pacific: Environment, Indoctrination, Race, and the Combat Experience on Guadalcanal” (MA diss., Temple University, 1999), 10.

⁴ David Sears, “The 2nd Marine Raiders’ legendary march across Guadalcanal,” World War II, 14 August, 2016.

commodity would enable their efficient use in missions critical to the war effort. War is inherently dangerous, and many of the Pacific islands the Raiders fought on created a highly challenging environment full of diseases, parasites, and extreme climates. But by mitigating as many of the dangers as possible, the battalion would have been better preserved for future missions. Too many of the Raiders were lost from preventable circumstances. Many precautions could have been instituted that would have significantly decreased the number of illnesses the 2nd Raiders endured, thereby posturing the unit for future operations.

Chapter II.

Background

Following the date that will live in infamy, 7 December 1941, and the Japanese devastation of the U.S Pacific Fleet, the United States was looking for a chance to take the offensive. The Imperial Japanese forces rapidly spread throughout the Pacific in the early stages of World War II. In the south, they reached New Guinea. In the west, Chinese Manchuria and Burma. In the north, the U.S. Aleutian Islands. In the eastern Pacific, they were stopped at Midway Island in 1942. After the Midway setback, the Imperial forces began to push deeper into the South Pacific, intending to sever the Australian-U.S. line of communication.⁵ The Pacific Theater created a unique challenge for all parties involved. The distances required stretched the logistical capabilities of all those nations. Backup and support were often far away. The Japanese intended to create an interlocking defensive perimeter of fortified islands containing airfields. This was known as the Pacific Island Barrier, stretching from the Aleutians in the north to the Marianas in the south. These strategic outposts provided the Imperial Japanese Navy and Army a protective buffer allowing them to launch attacks against any U.S. force passing nearby. The intent was to draw the U.S. Navy into a decisive battle⁶ where the Imperial Japanese Navy could bring to bear its surface fleet while being supported with naval and

⁵ Richard B. Frank, *Guadalcanal* (New York, Random House, 1990), 31.

⁶ Richard B. Frank, *Towers of Skulls: A History of the Asia-Pacific War July 1937-May 1942* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2020), 504.

land-based aircraft to win a significant Japanese victory that would force the United States into suing for peace.

In the months leading up to the Battle of Guadalcanal, the Pacific Theater was marked by intense engagements between Allied and Axis forces. In August 1942, the United States and Japanese forces in the Pacific were still evenly matched as the U.S. war

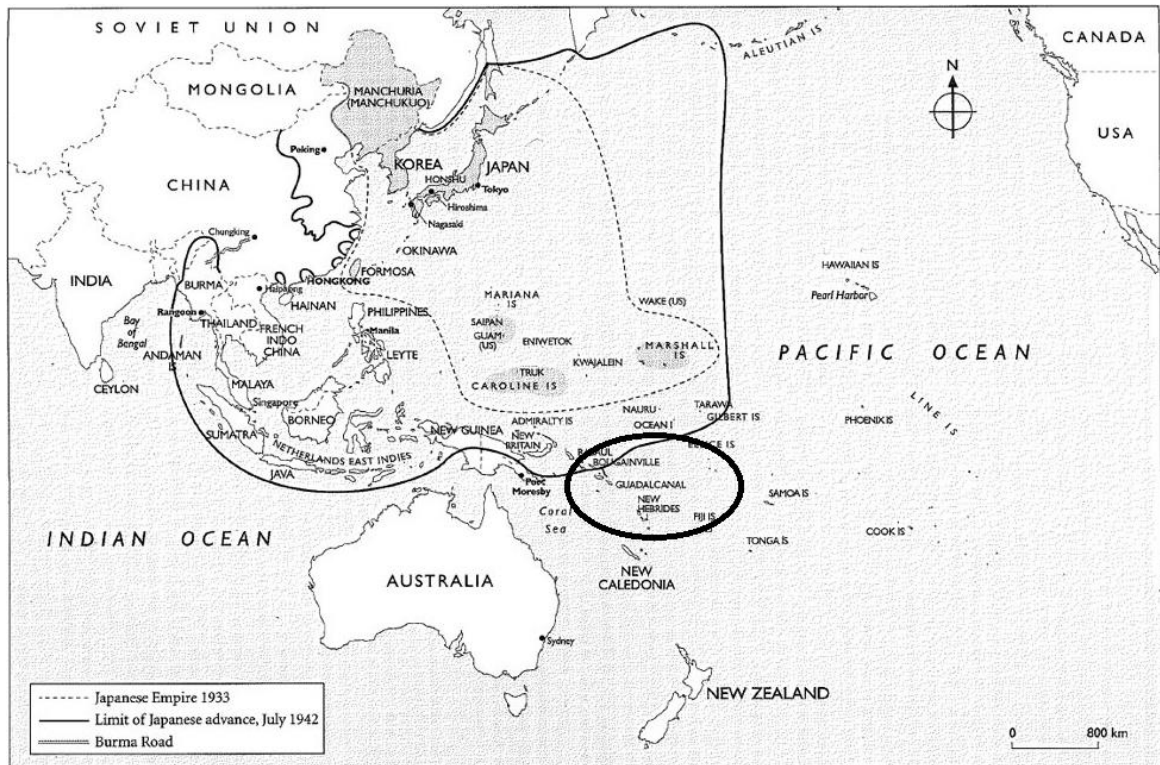


Figure 1. Map of the Pacific Theater, 1942

The Pacific Theater at the height of the Japanese expansion. Guadalcanal and the Solomon Islands are circled (McGibbon 2007)

machine worked to reach peak wartime production and increase the number of U.S. Navy ships. The rapid expansion by the Imperial Japanese forces resulted in several significant naval battles, including that of the Coral Sea, Midway, and the Eastern Solomons. While these battles reduced the Imperial Japanese Navy, they did not result in the domination of the sea lanes by the U.S. Navy. The battle of Guadalcanal marked the height of expansion by the Japanese Empire. The battle quickly became a lynchpin, with a Imperial Japanese

communique stating as the campaign raged on, “It must be said that the success or failure in recapturing Guadalcanal Island, and the vital naval battle related to it, is the fork in the road which leads to victory for them or for us.”⁷ Guadalcanal provided an opportunity for the U.S. to maintain a strategic link to an ally in Australia. Meanwhile, the converse was true in that Guadalcanal represented an opportunity for the Japanese to cut off Australia from critical U.S. support.

As the Japanese began to construct an airfield on the island of Guadalcanal it threatened the ability of the United States to materially support and coordinate with Australia. The strategic reality forced the United States to respond. A combined Navy and Marine Corps force was sent to secure the island and finish the airfield. The fighting to take the island lasted for seven months and included intense sea, air, and land combat. Carlson’s Raiders would play an outsized role in the campaign but the impact of the Raiders would be unclear without understanding the island's geography.

Guadalcanal’s topography was (and still is) highly formidable, covered across with tropical jungles containing fields of razor-sharp kunai grass; the island included many steep corral ridges, disease-infested swamps, and fast-moving rivers. The wildlife on Guadalcanal comprised a multitude of crocodiles, leeches, various poisonous snakes, scorpions, and spiders. Disease-carrying insects were common throughout the island. Guadalcanal’s proximity to the equator meant high temperatures and humidity within the “world’s wettest area.”⁸ The island has an average annual rainfall of 130 inches, or over 12 feet,⁹ equating to nearly half an inch of daily rain—the aggressive terrain limited

⁷ Quoted in Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 492.

⁸ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 25.

⁹ UN Statistics Division, “Statistics: Precipitation”, accessed 22 December 2023, <https://data.un.org/Data.aspx?d=CLINO&f=ElementCode%3A06>.

In 1942, Guadalcanal hosted a few small villages and Australian coconut plantations before the Japanese began construction of the airfield. Prior to Japanese occupation, the island was part of the British Solomon Islands Protectorate. There were very few roads, most of which were near the coast. Cross-island travel was mostly on foot along the few narrow and rugged trails through the jungle. The regular rainfall made travel on these trails even more complicated, with the paths regularly being washed out or turned into nearly impassable mudbogs.

The battle for Guadalcanal began on 7 August 1942, when U.S. Marines landed on the island. The landing occurred precisely eight months after the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor and marked the first major offensive by Allied forces against Japanese-held territory. The objective was to seize and secure the airfield, later to be named Henderson Field after a fallen Marine aviator. The airfield was crucial for controlling the surrounding air and sea lanes. The Marines surprised the Japanese and were able to quickly take control of the airfield and set up a defensive perimeter. After the initial surprise, the Imperial Japanese Army efforts were to regain that strategic asset. The U.S. Marines held on to their positions despite facing tough Japanese assaults. In this campaign, the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion conducted what became known as the “Long Patrol.” A review of the geopolitical situation puts the Guadalcanal campaign in context.

Throughout the Guadalcanal campaign, the Imperial Japanese Navy and U.S. Navy fought and maneuvered. It would be some time before the U.S. Navy would have enough ships, aircraft, and sailors to truly dominate the Pacific. Early in the war the priority of troops and equipment would go to Europe to fight Adolf Hitler’s Nazi regime. The lack of sea dominance and near parity between the Pacific belligerents meant the

flow of supplies and reinforcement to Guadalcanal would regularly be interrupted for the United States and Japanese forces on the island as they each tried to cut off lines of logistical support. Airpower played a crucial role in the Pacific Theater, with both sides engaged in intense attritional aerial combat. Henderson Field on Guadalcanal became a focal point for air operations. Its influence on naval campaigning and control of the skies was vital for the success of both ground and naval forces.

The Guadalcanal campaign was a critical period, setting the stage for more extensive campaigns and shaping the balance of power in the region. The battles and campaigns during this time had a lasting impact on the overall trajectory of the war in the Pacific. The Allied victories in the naval battles and the successful defense and holding of Guadalcanal marked a turning point in the Pacific War. The foothold the Allies gained enabled them to launch further offensives against Japanese-held territories.

Even though the Marine landings faced little opposition, taking the Japanese by surprise, the American leadership was continually apprehensive through most of the campaign. The Imperial Japanese forces had been highly effective in the Pacific and Asia to this point in the war. Author Richard Franks distinguished it from later campaigns: “Guadalcanal came after a long run of humiliating defeats and featured a close balance of forces. Unlike troops who fought subsequent actions in the Pacific, however savage, the Marines on Guadalcanal lacked the moral reserve that a long string of successes or a large preponderance of firepower gives to any unit.”¹⁰ The Japanese, and even most of the United States military leadership, thought the earliest that the United States could sustain a significant offensive in the Pacific would be the summer of 1943.¹¹ After three

¹⁰ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 256.

¹¹ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 44.

months of heavy fighting to control Henderson Field, the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion landed as reinforcements. General Vandegrift, the Marine Commanding General, saw an opportunity and sent the 2nd Raiders out to harass, observe, and scout out the Japanese. This Long Patrol would become legendary amongst Marines and U.S. Special Operations Forces.

Chapter III.

2nd Marine Raider Battalion

The 2nd Marine Raider Battalion was one of the elite special operations units of the United States Marine Corps during World War II. Recruiting Marines to become Raiders differed by battalion. For the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, it involved specific criteria, including an interview and passing intensive training. Lieutenant Colonel (LtCol) Carlson wanted to ensure every Raider could withstand the intense physical, mental, and emotional strains that would come. The first months of the battalion's existence were preparation for the extremes of elite combat. The fire they were forged in during training would temper them for the challenges ahead. The best of Japan would face the best of the United States during the Long Patrol and test the new tactics and training of the 2nd Raider Battalion.

The Marine Raider Battalions were created to conduct amphibious raids, as well as scout and operate behind enemy lines. The 2nd Marine Raider Battalion's first commander, LtCol Evans Carlson, envisioned the 2nd Raiders to be "a lightly equipped, highly mobile organization in which every man was armed with a rapid-firing automatic or semiautomatic weapon, conditioned to hike long distances, and trained to live off the land, gathering and cooking his own food or eating it raw when the tactical situation so dictated."¹² Carlson based the need for these capabilities on the logic that "a successful raid depended upon two elements: surprise and mobility – enroute to, and on the objective, and when withdrawing."¹³ The Marine Raider battalions were created by order

¹² Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 15.

¹³ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 15.

of President Franklin D. Roosevelt, whom Evans Carlson knew from a previous Marine Corps assignment and had become good friends. Roosevelt's son, James "Jimmy" Roosevelt, would become the 2nd Raider's first Executive Officer, or second in command, and would take command of the 4th Marine Raider Battalion and so was not with the 2nd Raiders at Guadalcanal. Carlson's personal relationship with President Roosevelt contributed to the creation of the Raider Battalions, as Carlson lobbied directly for their creation and contributed to their being fielded the best equipment the nation could provide.

The Raider Battalions were initially modeled on the British Commandos.¹⁴ Admiral Chester Nimitz, Commander of the U.S. Pacific Fleet from shortly following the attack on Pearl Harbor to the end of the war, requested the use of commando-type units for raiding Japanese-held islands.¹⁵ These raids would be assigned to the Marine Raider Battalions and include the Makin Island raid on 17 August 1942 conducted by Carlson and a portion of his 2nd Raider Battalion. The raids that were conducted, in turn, prodded the Japanese to further disperse some of their limited navy and army resources throughout the Pacific, forcing the Japanese to divide its forces amongst the many islands. The Japanese then struggled to logistically support those geographically dispersed units. The Japanese Imperial Navy and the limited resources of the Japanese Empire meant the nation was not equipped to support so many far-flung outposts. By the summer of 1942, according to Eric Hammel, Japan had reached the limits of its ability to logistically support in a contested maritime environment.¹⁶ The raids by the Raider

¹⁴ "Department of the Navy. U.S. Marine Corps. Marine Raiders. 2/16/1942-2/1944," National Archives Catalog, accessed 7 October, 2023, <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/10678355>.

¹⁵ "Marine Raiders. 2/16/1942-2/1944," <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/10678355>.

¹⁶ Eric Hammel, *Guadalcanal: Starvation Island* (New York: Crown Publishers, 1987), 31.

Battalions and the offensive actions of the U.S. Navy stretched the limited Japanese resources even further. According to Imperial Japanese documents, approximately 28,872 Japanese were sent to Guadalcanal. Over twenty percent of them died of malnutrition and disease. Nearly half were killed in action or drowned when their ships were sunk. Only 8,290 made it off the island when the Japanese evacuated in February 1943.¹⁷ Raider battalions contributed to challenging the Imperial Japanese forces to defend everywhere, not knowing where the Raiders and other U.S. units might attack next.

The 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, also known as Carlson's Raiders, was officially activated on February 19, 1942. The 2nd Raiders were designed for hit-and-run raids behind enemy lines, guerrilla warfare, and unconventional tactics. The Marine Raiders made significant contributions to the war effort in the Pacific, and their legacy continues to influence modern special operations units within the Marine Corps. The four Raider Battalions would eventually be disbanded, with the Raiders transferred on 1 February 1944 to the newly reformed 4th Marine Regiment.¹⁸ The 4th Marine Regiment had previously been lost when the U.S. forces surrendered to the Imperial Japanese Army following the Japanese invasion of the Philippines in 1942.¹⁹ Many of the Raiders provided the leadership the 4th Marines would rely on for the remainder of the war as they invaded Guam and Okinawa. However, the principles and experiences of the Marine Raiders played a role in the development of modern special operations within the U.S. military. Today, Marine Special Operations Command traces its lineage to these Marine Raider Battalions.

¹⁷ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 763.

¹⁸ Carole Engle Avriett and Joseph C. Shusko, *Marine Raiders: The True Story of the Legendary WWII Battalions* (Washington DC, Regnery History, 2021), 235.

¹⁹ "Marine Raiders. 2/16/1942-2/1944," <https://catalog.archives.gov/id/10678355>.

The Marine Raiders were an all-volunteer force; those interested in joining the Raiders had to volunteer for the assignment. A company from the previously organized 1st Marine Raider Battalion was transferred to the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion to begin its creation. Since the 2nd Raiders were based in San Diego, recruits were sought after from other San Diego Marine units, although they primarily came from the 2nd Marine Division. Volunteers were screened for physical fitness, marksmanship skills, intelligence, leadership potential, and a willingness to undertake special operations missions. LtCol Carlson or the Executive Officer Major Roosevelt conducted the interviews of every Marine. They had the final word on who became members of the 2nd Raiders.²⁰ Candidates demonstrated exceptional skills in areas such as amphibious warfare and small unit tactics; a number even had prior combat experience.

The recruitment and interview process was depicted in the film *Gung Ho*²¹, released in 1943, less than a year following the Makin Island raid that was the basis for the movie. Carlson wrote that the 2nd Raiders must “be flexible, mobile, possess the maximum firepower commensurate with great mobility and be composed of men physically capable and mentally conditioned to ensure the hardships and overcome the obstacles necessary to accomplish the mission. It follows, therefore, that the personnel must be volunteers for this type of work and that they must be trained, conditioned, and indoctrinated for this particular type of work.”²² Raiders would be expected to forage for food while on campaign, Captain Peatross explained, “we had trained to live off the land

²⁰ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 13.

²¹ Lucien Hubbard, Randolph Scott, Robert Mitchum, Ray Enright, *Gung Ho! The Story of Carlson's Makin Island Raiders* (Universal Pictures Company, CA, 1943).

²² Evans Carlson, “Notes on the Organization of Raider Battalions” to Commanding General, IMAC, 28 December 1942 (Evans Carlson Collection, Marine Corps Research Center, Quantico, VA).

and expected to do so”²³ and used their foraging skills to significant effect during the Long Patrol, using creativity such as fishing with hand grenades²⁴ in one of the many rivers that crisscrossed the island.

Once selected, volunteers underwent a rigorous training program to prepare for the unique challenges of special operations. According to Wukovits, training included “calisthenics, swimming, running, hiking, jungle tactics, map reading, camouflaging, jungle hygiene, demolitions, sharpshooting, street fighting, cliff scaling, and sniping . . . the days invariably started early-around four thirty a.m.-and ended well after dark.”²⁵ Upon completion of initial training, the regimen was expanded to include nighttime maneuvers and small boat training. The training venue was initially in southern California but was moved to Hawaii before the battalion’s deployment for combat.

LtCol Evans Carlson (a career Marine eventually promoted up through the ranks to Brigadier General), was as unique as the battalion he commanded. Having served in China three separate times, he was enthralled by how the Chinese Communists under Mao Zedong had organized their forces. Carlson studied their tactics and leadership methods and even observed some of their campaigns against the Japanese. He spoke directly with Mao, who advocated “the employment of speedy strikes by highly maneuverable forces against the points of weakest resistance...Enemy advances, we retreat. Enemy halts; we harass. Enemy tires, we attack. Enemy retreats, we pursue.”²⁶ Carlson wrote of his determination to follow suit: “If I ever have an outfit of my own, I’m going to give them ethical indoctrination. I’m going to show them how they can find the

²³ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 136.

²⁴ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 159.

²⁵ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 47.

²⁶ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 10.

will to sacrifice and the desire to endure. This is not a Chinese thing but a human thing. This is what makes great soldiers.”²⁷ Carlson was already a combat veteran, having participated in combat during what has been termed the “Banana Wars” throughout Central America, mainly in Nicaragua. He understood the difference being a veteran of combat made in leadership and knowing the importance of preparation. Several of those he assigned to leadership positions in the 2nd Raiders were combat veterans. Carlson took great care in posting leadership while organizing the 2nd Raiders.

The organization and primary equipment used by the 2nd Raider Battalion had to be highly mobile. Carlson organized the battalion into six companies, each company with four platoons. Each platoon had three rifle squads, and each rifle squad contained three “fireteams” (the 2nd Raider Battalion created the term fireteam as a part of their organization; before the fireteam, the smallest unit in the United States military was the squad), each fire team had three Raiders. They were armed with an M-1 Garand rifle, a Thompson sub-machine gun, and a Browning Automatic Rifle (BAR). This revolutionary organization brought more firepower to a small unit than was typical in the United States or Japanese militaries. This firepower would be of great benefit as the Raiders were often outnumbered, Company B commander Captain Oscar Peatross wrote “The firepower of our Raider squad (three BARS, three Thompson submachine guns, and four M-1 rifles) was now superior to that known to exist in any unit of comparable size in the world and was far superior to that of the rifle squad of the Marine infantry (two BARs and six bolt-action Springfield rifles).”²⁸ The squad and fireteam organization was proven so effective

²⁷ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 13.

²⁸ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 16.

that the larger Marine Corps would eventually adopt a similar version²⁹ and Marine rifle platoons continue to use a version of it to the present day.

When the 2nd Raider Battalion arrived at Guadalcanal, they received some specialized personnel that were attached but were not part of the organic unit, such as the Navajo code-talkers used to secure communications.³⁰ These code-talkers used their native Navajo language and a specialized communication code to communicate amongst units. Throughout the war, the Navajo code was never broken by the Japanese.

The total number of Marines of the 2nd Raiders that participated in the Long Patrol is broken down in Table 1 below:

Table 1. 2nd Raider Battalion muster by company-November 1942.³¹

Unit	Marine Officers	Marine Enlisted	Navy Officers	Navy Enlisted	Totals
HQ Company	11	144	4	1	160
A Company	4	139	0	3	146
B Company	3	138	0	3	144
C Company	3	132	0	2	137
D Company	4	120	0	3	127
E Company	4	132	0	3	139
F Company	4	131	0	3	138
Battalion	33	936	4	18	991

While a total of 991 Marines and Sailors were assigned to the battalion, not all of them were on the Long Patrol at the same time. One of the companies would come after the patrol had already begun. Of note, all of the Navy officers and enlisted were medical personnel. The Marine Corps did not (and does not to this day) have Marines assigned in

²⁹ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 15.

³⁰ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 159.

³¹ Muster Rolls, Nov 1942, "Records Relating to United States Marine Corps Operations in World War II, 1939-1949," (United States National Archives, accessed October 30, 2023).

the medical field. Navy Sailors provided all medical needs and went everywhere with the Raiders units to which they were assigned.

Many of the 2nd Raider Battalion members had a taste of combat in World War II before landing at Guadalcanal. Two companies had assisted in defending Midway Island from a Japanese attack from 4-7 June 1942,³² and another two companies had conducted the raid on Makin Island³³ from 17-18 August 1942. Four of the six companies had combat experience operating as independent companies. However, the Long Patrol would be the first time the battalion operated together and was the “baptism by fire” for nearly half of the Raiders.

A group of natives and British personnel living in the Solomon Islands were known as the Coastwatchers and assisted the Allies by watching and reporting Japanese movements and actions. The Coastwatchers were men of high mental and physical courage and would provide substantial assistance to the 2nd Raiders both as scouts and in transporting supplies. Of note, one of the leading Coastwatchers who helped Carlson’s Raiders was Sergeant Major Jacob Vouza. While Vouza stands out for his bravery and exceptional ability, the Coastwatchers and natives he led were no less instrumental. Vouza was a native who was awarded a Silver Star by Major General Vandegrift after enduring torture and being left for dead by Japanese soldiers. The incident occurred two months into the Guadalcanal campaign on 19 August.

After being captured by the Japanese and questioned about “American troop strength and dispositions . . . Vouza just shook his head, the guards tied him to a tree and beat him with rifle butts. Still no answer, so they stabbed him in the chest with their

³² Wukovits, *American Commando*, 89.

³³ Avriett, *Marine Raiders*, 73.

bayonets, and an officer slashed his throat with a sword. Again, there was no answer. Finally, they left him for dead, still tied to the tree, and hurried west.”³⁴ These Japanese soldiers were part of Colonel Kyono Ichiki’s³⁵ force meant to retake the airfield in a surprise attack on the night of 20 August.

Even though severely injured, Vouza was able to work his way loose from the tree and then stumble/crawl the three miles to the Marine lines. The story is retold in *The Coastwatchers*, that he “lay on the ground, nearly fainting from loss of blood, too weak even to sit up. Still, he refused any treatment until he could report everything he had seen ... Vouza poured out the best information yet received on the Japanese strength and weapons...as he finished, Vouza collapsed and was rushed to the field hospital.”³⁶ This information was critical to the defense of the Marine perimeter. The Marines used that intelligence to maneuver units into positions that would destroy Ichiki’s force. Sergeant Major Vouza was just as brave and helpful while leading the native scouts in support of the Long Patrol. The 2nd Raiders would not have been as successful without the support of the Coastwatchers, native scouts, and men such as Sergeant Major Vouza. Vouza received the Legion of Merit for his service to the 2nd Raiders during the Long Patrol.³⁷ The knowledge of the geography and native people on the island that he and the other Coastwatchers possessed made them invaluable to the Raiders.

While the Coastwatchers would provide the necessary geographic expertise, the 2nd Raider Battalion used all available time in the months leading up to the Long Patrol

³⁴ Walter Lord, *Lonely Vigil: Coastwatchers of the Solomons* (New York: Viking Press, 1977), 49-50.

³⁵ LtCol W. D. Long, *Japanese Order of Battle* (Washington D. C.: Headquarters Marine Corps Intelligence Report, 1943), 1-2.

³⁶ Lord, *Lonely Vigil*, 50.

³⁷ Henry I. Shaw, Jr, *First Offensive: The Marine Campaign for Guadalcanal* (Washington, D. C.: History and Museum Division, Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1992), 22.

to physically and mentally prepare for the struggles that would come. They were well-equipped, physically conditioned, and mentally prepared for the rigors ahead. The Coastwatchers and scouts were vital to the patrol's success. The Long Patrol would pit some of the best the United States Marine Corps could offer against the battle-tested Imperial Japanese Army. The 2nd Raiders were a handpicked, elite unit that was put through an intense training regime to be ready to operate in a hostile environment far from any support or sources of supply. Carlson would have a chance to validate the concept of special force commando-style units within U.S. military doctrine.

Chapter IV.

Combat Actions during the Long Patrol

During the Long Patrol, Carlson's Raiders used their specific skillset against the Imperial Japanese Army. They conducted light hit-and-run unconventional warfare attacks on the Japanese, disrupting their supply lines and taking advantage of the element of surprise. Due to the critical nature of the Henderson Field perimeter and manpower shortages amongst the 1st Marine Division, only the 2nd Marine Raiders were able to go out on an extended major patrol. As reported by Captain Peatross, "the division could not afford to send even a battalion-sized task force outside the perimeter for any length of time. For that reason, if our battalion got into serious trouble, the division would be unable to provide any significant assistance."³⁸ The 2nd Raiders would primarily be on their own throughout the Long Patrol, receiving some limited artillery and air support. The Battalion Operations Officer Captain Davis outlined the complexity of the problem, the Raiders were to "not let ourselves become involved in a static, face-to-face battle and bog down on a fixed line for a protracted period."³⁹ The Long Patrol would contribute to weakening the combat capacity of the Imperial Japanese soldiers. Yet it would come at a heavy cost. This chapter will evaluate the actions of the Raiders on the patrol to better understand what they endured and why it took such a toll on them physically and mentally. The Raiders overcame many hardships and challenges in using unconventional warfare to attack the Imperial Japanese forces and their supply lines.

³⁸ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 136.

³⁹ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 136.

The 2nd Marine Raider Battalion arrived at Guadalcanal three months into the campaign when Major General Vandegrift, the ground forces commander, concluded an opportunity existed to expand beyond the small perimeter around the airfield.⁴⁰ Figure 3 depicts the patrol and major combat engagements.⁴¹ Carlson landed with two of his

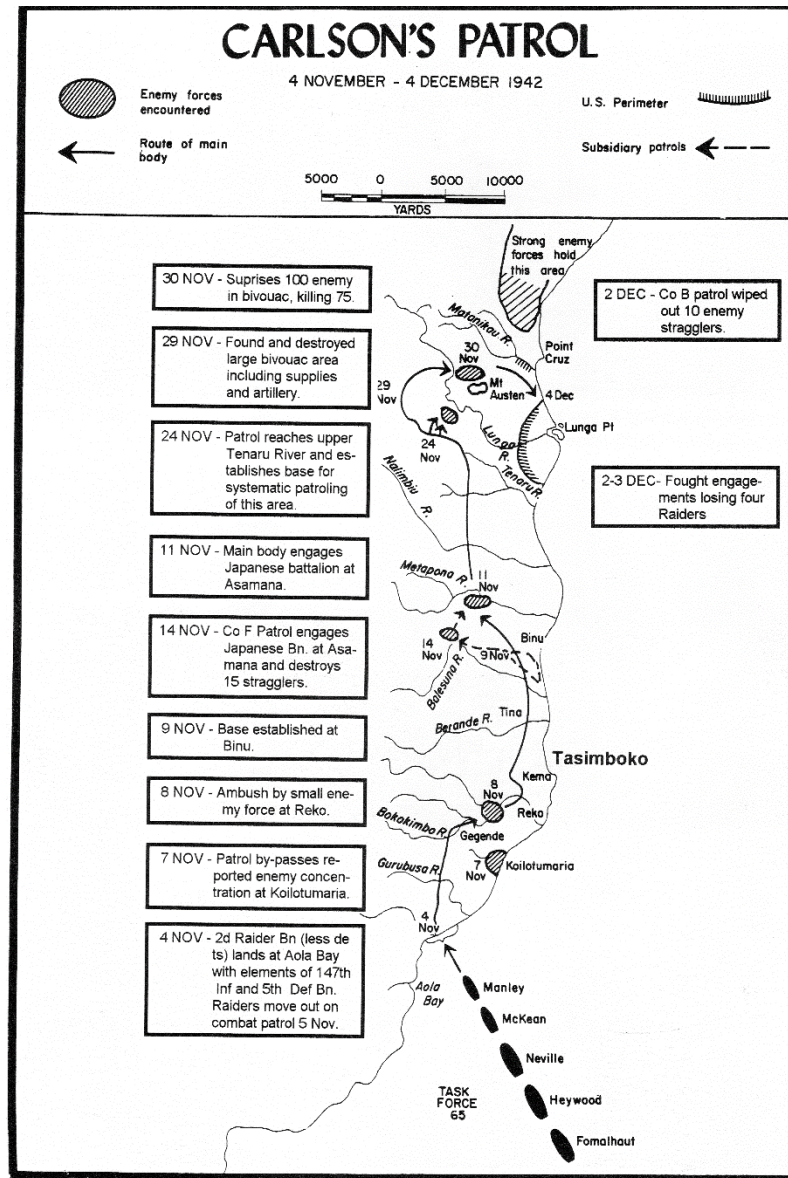


Figure 3. 2nd Marine Raider Battalion Long Patrol

⁴⁰ Maj John Zimmerman, *The Guadalcanal Campaign* (Washington, D. C.: Historical Section, Division of Public Information, Headquarter U.S. Marine Corps, 1949), 141.

⁴¹ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 144.

Raider companies at Aola Bay on 4 November 1942, sending out small patrols to reconnoiter the area. On 6 November, the Raiders pushed out with Coastwatchers and several native scouts as guides, including Sergeant Major Jacob Vouza, already a hero in the campaign. The men initially carried four days of canned rations, rice, and bacon; uncertain about the resupply timeline. The extended patrol involved little food, was surrounded by the enemy, could not evacuate, and was moving rapidly. As stated by one member of the 2nd Raiders, "If you take a prisoner, he's gotta eat your food, he's gotta drink your water, and you gotta worry about having your throat cut." After finding one of their own, Private Owen Barber, staked to the ground, castrated, tortured, and executed, the Raiders became reluctant to take prisoners.⁴² Sending the Raiders into the jungle meant battling Guadalcanal itself, "All of us had sores on our legs. We were wading streams and rivers all the time," stated Raider Ben Carson, "Our Corpsmen were running out of medication."⁴³ The severe environment caused more casualties to the 2nd Raider Battalion than the Japanese at a rate of nearly seven-fold.

Carlson's Raiders initially moved inland, but then turned west along narrow and overgrown trails. The native scouts were incredibly helpful in leading the way. Carlson incorporated techniques he had learned from the Chinese Communists into his strategy, which involved deploying strong and aggressive patrols that would move out toward the direction of movement. The main body of the troops would follow the patrols, and if the patrols encountered resistance, the main body would attack the enemy from their sides or flank to the enemy rear. This tactic proved to be highly effective in enabling the troops to

⁴² Sears, "The 2nd Marine Raiders' legendary march across Guadalcanal".

⁴³ Sears, "The 2nd Marine Raiders' legendary march across Guadalcanal".

engage the Japanese quickly and with great strength from any point of contact, while then striking from unexpected directions.⁴⁴ Although there were casualties, the 2nd Raider's flexible and aggressive approach enabled them to fight larger enemy forces. On 8 November, the lead unit ran into a small Japanese patrol near Reko. The Raider's training enabled a rapid response, killing two Japanese, while one native scout suffered wounds.⁴⁵ The Raiders were able to confiscate and put to good use the pig the Japanese had killed and were preparing to eat. The following day, the patrol arrived at the village of Binu on the Balesuna River and halted while confirming their position with other Marine and Army units. On 10 November, three companies of the 2nd Raiders landed at Tasimboko and then marched to link up with Carlson's group. For the next portion of the patrol, the Raiders received periodic resupplies using native scouts moving supplies from the coast. These coastal drops utilized beach landing craft called Higgins boats that could run up the beach, drop a ramp, unload, and then rapidly return to the sea. Typical rations included rice, raisins, salt pork, and D-ration chocolate bars packed with nutrition. These meals could be quickly cooked and consumed, with leftovers eaten while moving on the trail.

During the night of 9-10 November, approximately 3,000 Imperial Japanese soldiers escaped from the American encirclement near the Metapona River. Under Colonel Toshinari Shōji,⁴⁶ this Japanese force was the principal opponent of Carlson's Raiders during the Long Patrol. Major General Vandegrift sent the 2nd Raiders on a special operations mission against the Imperial Army forces under Colonel Shōji, and "for all practical purposes, Shōji and Carlson disappeared into the deep jungle to fight

⁴⁴ Zimmerman, *The Guadalcanal Campaign*, 142.

⁴⁵ F.P. Massaro, *Report, 13 November 1942* (Division Intelligence Section, Headquarters First Marine Division, 1942), 1.

⁴⁶ Long, *Japanese Order of Battle*, 1.

their own campaign."⁴⁷ Shōji's men were hungry and tired; it had been months since the Imperial Japanese Navy had been able to resupply the island regularly.⁴⁸ While Carlson's Raiders would kill many of Shōji's men, the disruption of their movements and destruction of supplies took a greater toll. By the time control of Guadalcanal was achieved, more Japanese died from starvation and disease⁴⁹ than enemy actions.

Starting on 11 November, Carlson began sending out four companies on independent patrols, with a fifth in reserve. On patrol, Company C clashed with a large Japanese force near Asamana village on the Metapona River. The company had been crossing an extensive grassy area when it surprised the enemy at their campsite. The fighting was fierce, with the Raiders inflicting many casualties while also losing five men killed and three wounded.⁵⁰ The Imperial force quickly pinned down the Raiders due to superior firepower from rifles, machine guns, and mortars while being in a more defensible position.

Company C leadership radioed Carlson, who moved two other patrolling companies to assist and sent a platoon from the reserve company.⁵¹ One of the companies that responded, Company E, engaged with a separate Imperial Japanese Army group while trying to cross the Metapona, forcing Company E to pull back initially. Company E then counterattacked and inflicted many casualties on the Japanese while they were trying to cross the river.⁵² Still, Company E could not get through to assist Company C. Carlson then moved to lead the reserve company, Company F, to the relief of Company C. But by

⁴⁷ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 424.

⁴⁸ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 406.

⁴⁹ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 527.

⁵⁰ LtCol Evans Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal between 4 November and 4 December, 1942", (Combat Report, Quantico: Marine Corps Research Center, 1942).

⁵¹ Massaro, *Report, 13 November 1942*, 2.

⁵² Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 140.

the time they arrived, Company C had been able to conduct a fighting withdrawal using mortars for cover. After calling in airstrikes, Carlson maneuvered Company E and F to perform a flanking attack against the main Japanese force, but the Japanese had already retreated during the lull in the fighting.

Meanwhile, Company D clashed with another group of Japanese soldiers and was pinned down without radio contact for most of the day. The action resulted in the company losing two killed Raiders and one wounded.⁵³ Eventually, Company D was able to extract themselves and link up with the rest of the battalion.

On 12 November, the 2nd Raiders moved to Asamana village. The village had been Shōji's headquarters before the Raiders had arrived. Throughout the day straggler Japanese soldiers attempted to link up with their unit, mistakenly thinking the unit was still in the village. The Raiders killed approximately 25 of the stragglers.⁵⁴ During the following day, the Raiders observed Japanese units maneuvering in the vicinity of the village and used artillery strikes to destroy and disrupt.

Carlson moved back to Binu on 14 November to receive supplies. During the movement, Company F surprised and destroyed a 15-man Japanese outpost the native scouts had discovered.⁵⁵ The next day, the Raiders returned to Asamana to use the village as a base camp. Over the next two days, the companies continued to patrol in the area, but there was little action.

On 17 November, Major General Vandegrift gave Carlson two more directives: first, to find and then destroy the Japanese howitzer known as "Pistol Pete",⁵⁶ and second,

⁵³ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

⁵⁴ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

⁵⁵ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

⁵⁶ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 155.

to patrol the region south of the Marine perimeter, observing and harassing any Imperial Japanese units operating there.⁵⁷ Pistol Pete was a significant nuisance to the Marines as it regularly shelled Henderson Field and heavily disrupted aviation operations.

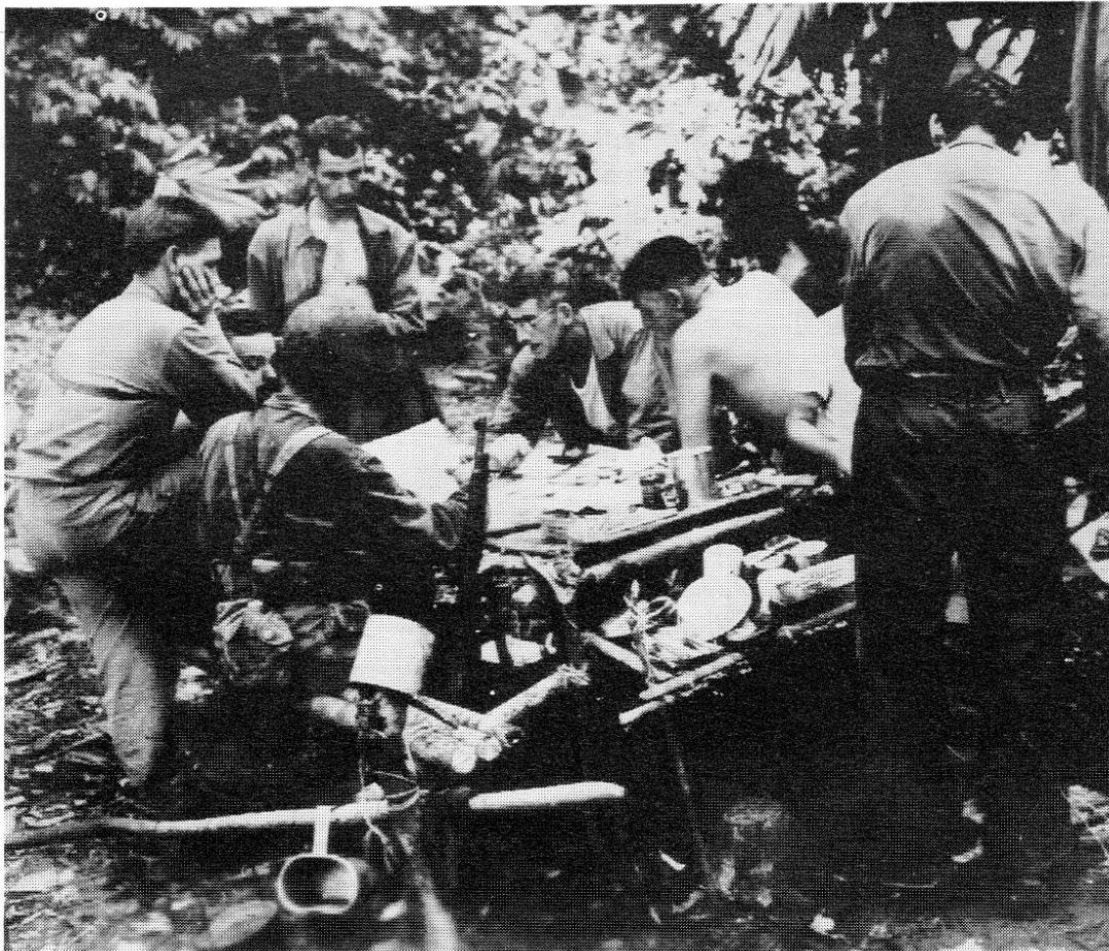


Figure 4. Battalion Strategy Session

The 2nd Raider leadership conducting a planning session during the Long Patrol. Center wearing glasses is Lieutenant Colonel Carlson. (Peatross 1995)

The 2nd Raiders moved to a new location on the Tenaru River to accomplish Vandegrift's orders. On 25 November, the sixth and final company, Company A, joined the battalion after being transported from Espiritu Santo Island. The company had been

⁵⁷ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal."

guarding against Japanese infiltration on the island. After receiving the battalion's final company, Carlson divided the battalion into three combat teams, each with two companies. Each combat team operated independently within their sectors and shared a patrol base. The teams and the patrol bases daily moved further into the island's interior, operating between the Tenaru and Lunga rivers.

On 30 November, members of the battalion discovered a Japanese communication wire, following it back to a large, albeit empty, bivouac site that contained two artillery pieces. The Raiders destroyed them and continued to follow the wire, coming upon another campsite with approximately a hundred Imperial Japanese soldiers. Both groups were surprised, but the Raiders reacted quicker with heavy automatic weapons fire. Most of the Japanese had stacked their weapons out of reach, making it much easier for the Raiders, who counted 75 bodies after the action wrapped up.⁵⁸

The following day, 1 December, the Raiders received air-dropped resupplies and orders for Carlson to return to the Marine perimeter.⁵⁹ Carlson surveyed the status of his battalion and sent those companies back that had been on patrol the longest. He requested and received permission from Major General Vandegrift to take the rest on patrol up to the peak of Mount Austen. Mount Austen was the prominent terrain feature in the area, providing a vantage point to observe Henderson Field. On the way to the peak, Carlson's Raiders surprised a Japanese platoon. Following an intense firefight, the platoon was wiped out, with 25 Japanese soldiers killed at the loss of one dead and three wounded Raiders.⁶⁰ The next day, the Raiders were ambushed on their return march by seven

⁵⁸ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

⁵⁹ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

⁶⁰ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

Japanese soldiers in strong, well camouflaged fighting positions.⁶¹ Although the battalion killed all seven Japanese soldiers, four Raiders were lost from the ambush.

Throughout the Long Patrol, Sergeant Major Vouza astutely led the Coastwatcher and native scouts as they supported the 2nd Raiders. The scouts afforded a significant advantage for the Raiders over the Japanese by having locals familiar with the terrain and guiding the Raiders through the jungles. They transported food and supplies to key points, enabling the Raiders to keep up the pressure on the Imperial Japanese soldiers. The Coastwatchers and native scouts were with Carlson's Raiders as they marched into the Marine lines around Henderson Field when the Long Patrol was finished. The Marines entered the line singing the Marines Corps Hymn. The Coastwatcher and Sergeant Major Vouza then "persuaded the Marines to add so that everyone might join in, a chorus of Onward Christian Soldier."⁶² The support afforded by these individuals was a key enabling feature of the Long Patrol. It is quite likely the 2nd Raiders would not have succeeded on the patrol without them.

As Carlson's Raiders were entering the relative safety of the 1st Marine Division perimeter in rags, unshaven, and dirty, an offer was made to drive them to Henderson Field and the Division Command Post. Carlson responded, "The Raiders walked in, the Raiders will walk out."⁶³ While admirable, the attitude and stubbornness that Carlson showed in his leadership helped the 2nd Raiders endure some significant challenges but also contributed to some unnecessary suffering within the battalion.

⁶¹ Zimmerman, *The Guadalcanal Campaign*, 145.

⁶² Lord, *Lonely Vigil*, 101.

⁶³ Sears, "The 2nd Marine Raiders' legendary march across Guadalcanal".

The Long Patrol of the 2nd Marine Raiders was successful from a tactical point of view. The battalion killed 488 enemy soldiers at a cost of 16 dead and 18 wounded.⁶⁴ The battalion had covered 150 miles and fought in a dozen major combat actions.⁶⁵ Carlson's subsequent report praised his guerrilla tactics, which undoubtedly played an essential role in the favorable exchange ratio when comparing the number of U.S. and Japanese dead. Far away from the Marine perimeter, the Japanese regularly became careless and allowed themselves to be surprised, a phenomenon other Marine units had exploited earlier in the campaign. The aggressive and rapid movements combined with the concentrated firepower of the 2nd Raiders regularly caught the Imperial Japanese unaware and contributed to the large casualty count. On the patrol, the Raiders collected valuable intelligence on Imperial Japanese Army positions, movements, and intentions, crucial information that provided insight to American forces of Imperial Japanese dispositions and strategy. The continual 2nd Raider patrols prevented the weary Japanese from resting and recovering. The patrols kept the Japanese soldiers on edge, contributing to the strategy of wearing down the Imperial Japanese Army's strength on the island.⁶⁶

The experience gained by the 2nd Raiders in jungle warfare and unconventional tactics would prove invaluable in future operations. Still, it would be many months before the battalion would again be combat-ready. The time in the jungle had taken its toll, with 225 Raiders considered non-mission capable due to disease.⁶⁷ The battalion had lost 34

⁶⁴ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

⁶⁵ LtCol Frank O. Hough, Major Verle E. Ludwig, Henry I. Shaw, Jr, *History of U.S. Marine Corps Operations in World War II, Volume 1: Pearl Harbor to Guadalcanal* (Washington, D. C.: Headquarters, U.S. Marine Corps, 1989), 350.

⁶⁶ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 497.

⁶⁷ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 167.



Figure 5. 2nd Raiders on Patrol

The thick jungle brush of Guadalcanal is well illustrated in this picture. The environment was as much the enemy as the Japanese. (Photo, World War II- Guadalcanal and Guam 1942)

more casualties from enemy actions.⁶⁸ The 2nd Raiders required replacements for these 260 Raiders that were injured, ill, or killed. While the losses were significant, much was gained by the Long Patrol. The skills gained from navigating dense vegetation, dealing with adverse weather, and adapting to a challenging environment prepared these Marine Raiders for future Pacific operations. The 2nd Raiders endured many changes in leadership following the Long Patrol and before their next combat engagement. However, the important ability to operate independently, gather intelligence, and engage in hit-and-

⁶⁸ Carlson, "Report of Operations of this Battalion on Guadalcanal".

run tactics was disseminated from veterans to the newly joined replacements. The lessons from the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion and the Long Patrol influenced the future development of Marine Corps doctrine in special operations and reconnaissance. It enhanced the evolution of the United States military understanding of unconventional warfare and the need for specialized units. Even following the disbanding of the Raiders, the skills gained by former Raiders placed in regular Marine units enhanced their understanding and contributed to the mission success of the units to which they were moved.

The Raiders showed themselves to be brave, daring, and resourceful during the combat of the Long Patrol. They effectively created challenging tactical dilemmas for the Imperial Japanese forces but could have been more optimal at force preservation. Some simple steps would have increased the operation's success by enabling the 2nd Raiders for their next mission, as will be explored in the following chapters. But at the patrol's conclusion, all orders received from Major General Vandegrift were completed, the mission was a success, and the Japanese offensive capabilities were disrupted.

Chapter V.

Nutrition and Hygiene

A Soldier, Sailor, and Marine's physical and mental performance can be significantly affected by a lack of proper nutrition.⁶⁹ During the Guadalcanal operation and the Long Patrol, nutrition and improper hygiene became problematic, particularly for the Japanese who referred to the island as "Starvation Island".⁷⁰ The interrupted supply chain and harsh environment also impacted the Marines' land components. The Marine situation gradually improved throughout the campaign, whereas the Japanese situation continued to deteriorate until they were forced to evacuate from the island. Throughout the patrol, Carlson wrote the Raider's diet consisted of "dehydrated foods, and the chief diet was rice and tea prepared by the individual Marine."⁷¹ Captain Oscar Peatross wrote about his weight dropping from 160 pounds to 138 following the Long Patrol.⁷² This chapter explores how a lack of nutrition affected the troops involved and contributed to a degradation of the combat capability of the 2nd Raiders.

Proper nutrition is crucial for maintaining energy levels. Inadequate nutrition can lead to fatigue, weakness, and decreased physical endurance. People may struggle to perform physical tasks under its effects.⁷³ For Marines, it compromises their ability to carry out missions effectively. Nutrition plays a crucial role in brain function. Inadequate intake of essential nutrients can lead to cognitive impairment, affecting concentration,

⁶⁹ Wael Mohamed and Firas Kobeissy, *Nutrition and Psychiatric Disorders* (Singapore: Springer Verlag, 2022), 30.

⁷⁰ Hammel, *Guadalcanal: Starvation Island*, 248.

⁷¹ Carlson, *Answers to ACPF Questionnaire*, 6.

⁷² Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 166.

⁷³ "Diseases and Conditions."

decision-making, and overall mental sharpness.⁷⁴ This can be particularly problematic in situations that require quick thinking and strategic planning, “as the patrol wound into its second and third weeks, the number of stricken Raiders rose alarmingly. Despite their superb physical conditioning, long days in the jungle, subsisting on a meager diet, and laboring in damp conditions took their toll.”⁷⁵ By the end of the Long Patrol, many members of the 2nd Raiders struggled to accomplish some of the most mundane tasks.⁷⁶

Malnutrition weakens the immune system, making troops more susceptible to infections and illnesses. This likely was a factor in the vast number of Raiders who contracted major diseases over the thirty-day Long Patrol. The exposure to various environmental conditions by the 2nd Raiders made them more susceptible to pathogens, whose compromised immune systems meant severe consequences for many Raiders and the unit's overall effectiveness. Guadalcanal contained a wide variety of diseases, and the longer the Marines stayed on the island, the more they became a problem. The weakened immune systems of these Raiders created a situation in which not only were many of these diseases able to afflict the Raiders, but the time required for recovery was lengthened.

Proper nutrition is essential for the body's recovery and healing processes.⁷⁷ Injuries and diseases experienced during combat may take longer to heal if the body lacks the necessary nutrients. In the challenges and struggles on the patrol, Carlson's Raiders were more susceptible to issues, including inadequate protein intake, contributing to

⁷⁴ Mohamed, *Nutrition and Psychiatric Disorders*, 49-50.

⁷⁵ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 230.

⁷⁶ “Diseases and Conditions.”

⁷⁷ “Diseases and Conditions.”

muscle wasting and weakness.⁷⁸ This can hinder a Marine's physical strength, agility, and performance in demanding situations. After leaving Guadalcanal, the 2nd Raiders' nutrition was vastly improved, allowing for better medical care and better health.⁷⁹ This ameliorated some of the effects, but recovery was still slow for many.

Poor nutrition can lead to weakened bones. The Raiders endured physical challenges while carrying heavy gear, which made them more prone to injuries as their bodies lacked the nutrients needed for proper health. In military operations, where physical and mental performance are critical to mission success and individual safety, adequate nutrition is fundamental to maintaining a capable and effective fighting force. The Marine Corps strongly emphasizes providing sufficient nourishment for their personnel during training and deployment. A lack of proper hygiene among troops can have several negative consequences for the individuals involved and the unit's overall effectiveness. Malnutrition can contribute to mood disorders and mental health issues.⁸⁰ Many of the Marines who were already dealing with stress, anxiety, or depression had their conditions exacerbated by a lack of proper nutrition, further impacting their ability to cope with the demands of their roles.⁸¹ However, the 2nd Raiders were able to push through those challenges to complete their mission. Chronic malnutrition can have long-term health consequences. As the battalion Operations Officer, Oscar Peatross spoke of the continued challenges of the veterans of the Long Patrol in their recovery. For some, the recovery continued months after the battalion had left Guadalcanal.⁸²

⁷⁸ "Diseases and Conditions."

⁷⁹ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 169.

⁸⁰ "Diseases and Conditions."

⁸¹ "Diseases and Conditions."

⁸² Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 170.

Inadequate hygiene practices, such as infrequent bathing or improper cleaning of wounds, can increase the risk of bacterial, viral, and fungal infections. In Guadalcanal, Marines were regularly exposed to challenging environmental conditions with the constant rain and jungle patrols. Poor hygiene can contribute to various skin conditions, including fungal infections, rashes, and dermatitis. These conditions can be uncomfortable and interfere with a soldier's cognitive and physical ability to perform combat duties effectively.

Poor hygiene can rapidly spread infectious diseases in close quarters and high-density living situations, such as barracks or field camps. Contaminated surfaces, shared equipment, and close personal contact increase the risk of disease transmission among people. The Raiders struggled to maintain effective hygiene while on the trail. Some of it was by necessity, but some of it was self-inflicted. Effective hygiene practices were dismissed as unnecessary luxuries. During training, Company C had created a washstand to ensure proper hygiene, requiring each Marine to wash and sterilize their eating equipment prior to each meal to combat dysentery, "for a short time dysentery disappeared in Company C. Soon, however, Carlson found out about the washstand and ordered it destroyed, apparently considering such niceties too la-di-da for Raiders being toughened to live off the land."⁸³ While meeting proper hygiene standards in conditions like the 2nd Raiders endured is challenging, every available opportunity must be used for personal hygiene to preserve the force.

Personal hygiene also extends to the care of uniforms and equipment. Failure to maintain cleanliness in uniforms and gear can lead to equipment deterioration, reducing

⁸³ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 154.

its lifespan and effectiveness. In a firefight, a functioning weapon is paramount. A unit's overall readiness is compromised when many Marines have hygiene-related issues. The Raiders' health problems led to increased medical evacuations, decreased duty availability, and reduced effectiveness in carrying out the patrol. That the 2nd Raiders were still successful indicates the sheer determination of the Raiders. While daily hygiene was a challenge for Carlson's Raiders, on irregular intervals time was given for personal and equipment hygiene, "we were granted what were euphemistically called 'days of rest,' but which were spent washing clothes, cleaning and repairing weapons and equipment, and receiving first-aid type medical treatment, mostly for blisters on the feet and jungle rot. . . many could be seen walking about barefoot to toughen their feet and try to get rid of the effects of immersion foot."⁸⁴ While this limited hygiene was beneficial, it was not often enough to prevent the many effects of poor hygiene amongst the 2nd Raiders.

The impact of supply issues contributed to nutrition and hygiene issues. These problems did not only affect the Americans; in fact, the Japanese had far greater struggles in resupplying its far-flung forces, with the Imperial Japanese Headquarters on the island complaining in one communique, "for every ten units of resupply planned, only six are sent, only three are landed, and only two survive for consumption."⁸⁵ Exact numbers of Japanese who died of malnutrition and disease are challenging to collect with certainty. Wrote Captain Peatross, Company B Commander, referring to seeing the emaciated Imperial Japanese soldiers during the Long Patrol, "The evidence, however, that the Japanese had resorted to living (or in this case dying) off the land was significant as a

⁸⁴ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 156.

⁸⁵ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 406.

strong indication that we were winning the sea battle and had the Imperial Army on the ropes—at least on Guadalcanal.”⁸⁶ One U.S. Army soldier who faced the Japanese at Guadalcanal stated, “The Japanese Infantrymen and fighter and kamikaze pilots were, as a class, the bravest men who fought in this last war. Rationalizing individuals have called it fanaticism and ignorance instead of bravery, and have sold a lot of people upon the story that Japanese Infantrymen would have surrendered freely if they had known they would not be tortured after capture ... But most of us who have fought in the Pacific are ready to admit here and now, away from all the convincing firsthand evidence we have seen—mass starvation, untold suffering, shell shock, cannibalism, mass suicide—that for sheer, bloody, hardened-steel guts, the stocky and hard muscled little Jap doughboy has it all over any of us.”⁸⁷ As malnutrition racked the Imperial Army forces, it made them less combat-effective, decreasing the efficacy of assaults and inhibiting the abilities of commanders to make decisions and lead. Only 8,290, less than one-third, of the Imperial forces serving on Guadalcanal were evacuated in early 1943.

Nutrition and hygiene affected and decreased the fighting capability of the 2nd Raiders and the Japanese, “For their monthlong patrol, a vicious circle entrapped the Raiders. The many rigors sapped their energy and made them more susceptible to disease. The various diseases, in turn, made those rigors harder to handle.”⁸⁸ Fortunately for the 2nd Raiders, they arrived on the island later than the Imperial Japanese forces that they faced and were not as affected by the consequences of the supply chain initially.

⁸⁶ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 158.

⁸⁷ LtCol John B. George, *Shots Fired in Anger: A Rifleman's-Eye View of the Activities on the Island of Guadalcanal, in the Solomons, during the Elimination of the Japanese Forces There by the American Army under General Patch* (Plantersville, SC: Small Arms Technical Pub, 1947), 337.

⁸⁸ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 228.

This possibly contributed to the successes of the Raiders as they fought the Imperial Army units. Carlson would go on to admit that “Marines are adequately trained in field sanitation but must be forced to make the necessary precautions.”⁸⁹ In looking back, Carlson would have leadership more engaged in forcing proper sanitation amongst the 2nd Raiders as disease had a major effect. As the Raiders pushed themselves, their endurance and abilities were affected, and their combat efficiency decreased, contributing to General Vandegrift’s decision that the Raiders should return to the Marine perimeter.

⁸⁹ Carlson, *Answers to ACPF Questionnaire*, 4.

Chapter VI.

Illnesses

Disease was a constant companion for those on Guadalcanal, both American and Japanese alike. The environment was a near-perfect breeding ground, and combined with the malnourishment and regular combat, it made things as simple as hygiene much more challenging. The extreme environment “contributed greatly to the matter of combat brutality on Guadalcanal. As time progressed, American and Japanese men viewed the jungle as a second threat, some ways more deadly than the enemy.”⁹⁰ This contributed to the many diseases that afflicted the Marine Raiders during and following the Long Patrol. This chapter will examine the most prevalent diseases, their effects on the individual Raiders, and how that, in turn, affected the battalion.

Diseases began to affect the Raiders soon after their arrival. While on patrol, “men maintained a proper distance from the Raider directly ahead of them in case he had diarrhea [a symptom of dysentery]. The worst afflicted slices open the seat of their pants and allow nature to take its course.” Lieutenant Burnette commented, “My stool started crawling away; it had bugs in it.”⁹¹ Guadalcanal Island, the lack of proper hygiene and nutrition, and the long stressful days all created an environment where these diseases ran rampant through the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion. The primary diseases will be evaluated, with the number of recorded cases that were severe enough to be evacuated from the Long Patrol.

⁹⁰ Douville, “The ‘Barbarization’ of Warfare in the Pacific,” 10.

⁹¹ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 229.

Malaria⁹² was the biggest problem for the Raiders. It is a potentially life-threatening infectious disease caused by parasites. Transmission to humans is through the bite of infected female mosquitoes. Malaria continues to be a significant global health concern, particularly in tropical and subtropical regions where mosquitoes are prevalent. Guadalcanal regularly has periods of torrential rainfall, creating stagnant pools supporting the spread of mosquitos. When an infected mosquito bites a person, it injects the malaria parasites into their bloodstream. Once in the bloodstream, the parasites travel to the liver, where they multiply and mature. They then re-enter the bloodstream and infect red blood cells, causing them to burst. This cycle of infection and replication leads to the characteristic symptoms of malaria. When the 2nd Raiders landed on Guadalcanal, the Marines were reporting more than a thousand new cases of malaria and related diseases⁹³ on a weekly basis.

The symptoms of malaria can vary but include fever, chills, sweats, headache, muscle aches, fatigue, and nausea. The general information publication given to leadership within the 1st Marine Division prior to the landing stated malaria was prevalent in the high death rate of the natives in the three-year period of 1936-1938.⁹⁴ If left untreated, malaria can progress to severe forms leading to organ failure, anemia, and, in extreme cases, death. Malaria can be treated effectively with antimalarial medications, depending on the parasite species and the infection's severity. At this time in 1942, the drugs quinine and atabrine were used to suppress the effects of malaria but did not eliminate the disease. While these drugs were known to be effective against malaria, the

⁹² "Diseases and Conditions."

⁹³ Shaw, *First Offensive*, 43.

⁹⁴ *Guadalcanal General Information* (Washington, D. C.: Headquarters, First Marine Division, 1942), 1.

implementation for those fighting on Guadalcanal was spotty at best. In the after-action interviews of the battle, one Marine battalion commander admitted, “We did not start taking quinine and atabrine soon enough when we hit Guadalcanal. We are paying for this now.”⁹⁵ Some of that stemmed from commands not placing enough emphasis on using the drugs, they were newer and not well known amongst the American population. However, a persistent rumor amongst the Marines and Raiders circulated that these medications “yellowed the skin, and worse, threatened the sexual potency of users.”⁹⁶ Long-term use of the medications does yellow the skin, seeming to confirm the second half of the rumor and contributing to the Marines and Raiders collectively deciding not to use the preventative medication.

Prevention is a crucial aspect of malaria control. Actions include using insecticide-treated bed nets, indoor residual spraying of insecticides, taking medications when traveling to endemic areas, and controlling mosquito breeding sites. Preventing mosquito bites while on constant patrol in the jungle is a near-futile effort, even with today’s advances in insect repellent. In 1942, it was nearly impossible. In an after-action questionnaire, Carlson stated his recommendations for “more instruction in personal hygiene and field sanitation and to stress the importance of quinine in regards to malaria.”⁹⁷ Captain Louis H. Roddis of the U.S. Navy Medical Corps wrote that “there were more than five times as many casualties from malaria as from wounds”⁹⁸ amongst the Marines on Guadalcanal. The supply chain was stretched to the point that priorities

⁹⁵ LtCol Russel P. Reeder, Jr, *Fighting on Guadalcanal* (Washington, D.C., War Department, 1943), 46.

⁹⁶ Frank, *Guadalcanal*, 260.

⁹⁷ LtCol Evans F. Carlson, *Answers to ACPF Questionnaire* (Washington, D. C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1943), 3.

⁹⁸ CAPT Louis H. Roddis, *Naval Medical Experience and Lessons in the Conquest of Guadalcanal* (Washington, D. C.: Division of Publications, Bureau of Medicine and Surgery, Navy Department, 1943), 1.

had to be made, with food and ammunition likely taking priority over medicine and comforts, such as mosquito netting. A Marine veteran of Guadalcanal in after-action reviews that all patrols from 1-10 days need to be sure to have a mosquito net as well as flannel gloves for protection from insects while sleeping.⁹⁹ During the patrol and immediately following, 125 Raiders from the 2nd Raiders were evacuated¹⁰⁰ from the effects of malaria, hampering this small force. The use of antimalarial medications would have prevented the widespread outbreaks that occurred amongst the 2nd Raiders.

Dengue fever¹⁰¹ is caused by the dengue virus and, similar to malaria, is transmitted to humans through the bite of infected mosquitoes. Symptoms usually start with high fever, severe headache, pain behind the eyes, joint and muscle pain, and a rash. Sometimes, it is called “breakbone fever” because of the intense muscle and joint pain it can cause. The fever can last several days, typically around a week, but some Raiders felt weak and tired for weeks afterward. While dengue fever is not life-threatening in most cases, it can be highly uncomfortable and weaken the Raiders while on patrol. However, there was an unconfirmed number of cases that progressed to a more severe form called dengue hemorrhagic fever (or dengue shock syndrome), which can be dangerous and requires immediate medical attention.

There is no specific medicine to treat dengue fever. Rest, staying hydrated, and taking pain relievers like acetaminophen can help alleviate the symptoms. The best way to avoid dengue fever is to prevent mosquito bites. This includes using mosquito repellent, wearing long-sleeved clothing, and using mosquito nets. While dengue fever

⁹⁹ Reeder, *Fighting on Guadalcanal*, 61.

¹⁰⁰ Peatross, *Bless ‘em All*, 167.

¹⁰¹ “Diseases and Conditions.”

killed very few Raiders, it significantly affected combat power. Completing basic daily tasks became more challenging as Raiders were caught up in the fever, headaches, and joint pain. The more physically demanding activities, such as carrying heavy loads through difficult jungle paths, were only achieved through sheer determination.

Scrub typhus¹⁰² is an infectious bacterial disease. Transmission to humans is primarily through the bite of infected mites, particularly the larval stage of mites that live in grasses and shrubs. The symptoms include fever, headache, muscle pain, and chills. The fever can be high and persistent, and sometimes a skin rash appears. Raiders contracted scrub typhus when bitten by mites carrying the bacteria while moving through the dense brush found throughout the interior of Guadalcanal. Fortunately, the disease is not transmitted from person to person.

Protective clothing or insect repellants are the most common method of reducing scrub typhus. Long sleeves and pants are an adequate barrier to the mites. However, in the overgrown jungle of Guadalcanal, with plants and trees everywhere, no roads to speak of, and the 2nd Raiders eating, sleeping, and moving in the jungle for thirty days straight, these mites became constant companions and spread scrub typhus throughout the battalion. By the end of the Long Patrol, the Raider's clothing was ragged and inadequate protection against the mites.

Trench foot,¹⁰³ also known as immersion foot, is a condition that affects the feet when they are exposed to wet conditions for an extended period. It was first observed during World War I among soldiers who spent prolonged periods in damp and muddy trenches, hence the name "trench foot." This condition can occur when the feet are

¹⁰² "Diseases and Conditions."

¹⁰³ "Diseases and Conditions."

subjected to protracted moisture. The Marines on Guadalcanal had to deal with regular



Figure 6. Raiders patrol through one of the many rivers

The Raiders were continually walking through water and wet areas. Their difficulty in keeping their feet dry caused many cases of trench foot. (Peatross 1995)

rainfall, patrol through streams and rivers, and, while on patrol, could rarely take off their boots to allow their feet to dry. When they could take off their boots, there were often no dry socks or boots available to replace the wet items, requiring the Raiders to put their wet socks and boots back on their feet.

The primary symptoms of trench foot include numbness, tingling, and a cold, pale appearance of the affected feet. As the condition progresses, it can lead to pain, swelling, redness, and blisters. In severe cases, the skin and underlying tissues may become damaged, leading to tissue death (gangrene). The prolonged exposure to moisture affects

the blood vessels in the feet. It constricts the blood vessels, reducing blood flow to the extremities, which can result in tissue damage and the symptoms associated with trench foot. In more severe cases, medical attention may be required, including wound care for blisters and, in rare cases, antibiotics if there is an infection.

Dysentery¹⁰⁴ is a gastrointestinal illness characterized by inflammation of the intestines, particularly the colon, and it typically results in severe diarrhea that may contain blood and mucus. This condition is often caused by infection, which can be uncomfortable and sometimes even life-threatening. Dysentery is usually caused by certain types of bacteria, parasites, or viruses that infect the intestines. Other common symptoms include abdominal pain, cramps, fever, and a general feeling of illness.

Dehydration is a significant concern due to the loss of fluids through diarrhea. While 29 Raiders were evacuated for severe dysentery, nearly all Raiders suffered from it at some point during the Long Patrol.

Dysentery is typically spread through contaminated food or water. The contamination can be in the drinking water, on the cooking or eating utensils, or if the Marines move through contaminated water and the contaminated water comes into contact with open wounds.¹⁰⁵ It can also be transmitted through close contact with an infected person, particularly in crowded or unsanitary conditions. The Raiders primarily caught dysentery through contamination. There are different types of dysentery, including bacillary dysentery (caused by bacteria), amoebic dysentery (caused by the parasite *Entamoeba histolytica*), and viral dysentery (caused by certain viruses). The specific type determines the treatment and severity of the condition.

¹⁰⁴ "Diseases and Conditions."

¹⁰⁵ Reeder, *Fighting on Guadalcanal*, 50.

Treatment for dysentery in 1942 typically involved antiparasitic medications, depending on the underlying cause. Rehydration is crucial to replace the fluids lost through diarrhea. Severe cases may require hospitalization. Preventing dysentery involves practicing good hygiene, such as washing hands thoroughly with soap and clean water before eating or after using the toilet. Consuming safe, clean food and water sources is also essential when traveling to areas with a higher risk of dysentery. Dysentery can be a serious condition, especially if left untreated, as it can lead to complications like dehydration and, in severe cases, damage to the intestinal lining. Company C had proven an effective method in combating dysentery, as mentioned previously, but was rebutted by Carlson and forced to discontinue the practice. Carlson should have realized the positive results and instituted the practice throughout the battalion, as it would have benefited all on the patrol.

Ringworm¹⁰⁶, also called “Jungle Rot”¹⁰⁷ by the Marines on Guadalcanal, contributed to the evacuation of 71 Raiders due to complications related to this parasite.¹⁰⁸ Ringworm is a rash caused by a fungal infection. It is usually an itchy, circular rash with clearer skin in the middle. Ringworm gets its name because of its appearance, a scaly ring-shaped area. Sergeant Lipscombe of the 2nd Raiders commented on the effect the patrol had on his feet, “I had my feet get so damn big I couldn’t wear shoes from the jungle rot . . . by the time we got into camp that last day, I was wearing rags over my feet. I couldn’t get my shoes off. It took me many years to get rid of it.”¹⁰⁹ Ringworm is contagious and can be transmitted from person to person through direct

¹⁰⁶ “Diseases and Conditions.”

¹⁰⁷ Peatross, *Bless ‘em All*, 167.

¹⁰⁸ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 228.

¹⁰⁹ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 230.

touch or through touching a common surface. Occasionally, the fungal infection can increase in severity, requiring medical attention. Prevention is difficult as it is contagious even before symptoms appear. Proper hygiene is the best method for prevention. Anti-fungal medications such as lotion or ointments are used in treatment.

In 1942, treatment for various diseases, especially malaria, was already available, but implementing treatment and prevention was new within the military system. During that time, the knowledge regarding the treatment of these diseases was mainly confined to epidemiologists rather than the medical officers who were deployed with the Marines and Raiders. However, towards the end of the Guadalcanal campaign, Navy Malaria Control Units¹¹⁰ started to arrive. As a result, the spread of malaria decreased considerably as the



Figure 7. Malaria Control Unit on Guadalcanal

Sailor holds the Malaria Control Unit emblem on Guadalcanal. (Collection 1943) operations in the Solomon Islands continued. In 1943, epidemiology units also began to arrive to further combat dengue, dysentery, and other diseases.¹¹¹ The lessons learned on

¹¹⁰ Roddis, *Naval Medical Experience and Lessons in the Conquest of Guadalcanal*, 1.

¹¹¹ Roddis, *Naval Medical Experience and Lessons in the Conquest of Guadalcanal*, 2.

disease prevention and treatment were put to valuable use but were too late for the Raiders and other Marines who fought on Guadalcanal.

While the supply chain to Guadalcanal was stretched for the many Marines and Sailors within the perimeter, greater priority could have been given to the units actively patrolling in the disease-infested areas of the island. Bringing in mosquito netting and equipping them with proper medications would have enabled the 2nd Raiders to complete their mission while also having the foresight to prepare for future operations. Cleland E. Early, a lieutenant in the battalion who would retire from the Marine Corps with the rank of colonel, wrote of the Long Patrol, “words cannot describe the bravery, patriotism, and dedication of most members of the 2d Raider Battalion who stayed the whole operation. Enduring the living conditions was worse than the combat. My platoon went in with 30 men, one corpsman, and one officer. When we came out, we had one officer, one corpsman, and 18 enlisted, all of whom had malaria, worms, diarrhea, jungle rot, and high morale.”¹¹² Special operations forces require screening and extensive training time to be fully prepared for their unique missions. Losing some due to a lack of logistical planning and foresight is unacceptable and could have been resolved. Illnesses are not entirely preventable, but decreasing the number to more manageable levels would have significantly benefited the 2nd Raiders to be better postured for both future missions and more veteran personnel to train the inevitable replacements that were coming once the battalion left Guadalcanal.

¹¹² Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 168.

Chapter VII.

Long Patrol Recovery Efforts

Carlson's 2nd Marine Raider Battalion muster reports from October to December 1942 tell how disease and combat affected the battalion. While 16 Raiders were killed and 18 wounded by the Japanese, another 225 had to be evacuated due to disease. Carlson wrote to his former executive officer, Major James Roosevelt, "Attrition due to disease was high-casualties low. I pared out the weaklings ruthlessly, with the idea of keeping the combat strength lusty and rugged."¹¹³ Practicality guided the evacuations. Instead of needing two somewhat healthy Marines to care for sick ones, Raiders too sick to carry on were evacuated to friendly lines. The 2nd Raiders continued to have recurring bouts of disease amongst the veterans of the Long Patrol as they struggled to heal fully.

The recovery process for the injured and sick members of the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion following the Guadalcanal Long Patrol involved several stages and medical procedures. During World War II, medical care in the field was challenging due to the nature of the conflict and the conditions in the Pacific theater.¹¹⁴ Wounded and sick Marines would receive immediate care on Guadalcanal. This initial care might involve basic first aid and stabilization of injuries or illnesses. Seriously wounded or sick Marines would be prioritized for medical evacuation. In the case of the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion, this involved transporting Raiders from the point of injury or illness, often through inhospitable terrain, to the nearest medical facilities. Medical facilities, often

¹¹³ Wukovits, *American Commando*, 230.

¹¹⁴ Thomas Helling, *Desperate Surgery in the Pacific War: Doctors and Damage Control for American wounded, 1941-1945* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2017), 43.

called field hospitals or aid stations, were established on Guadalcanal to provide more advanced care. Here, medical personnel would assess and treat injuries and illnesses and make decisions regarding further evacuation. All evacuees were taken back to the field hospital inside the Henderson Field perimeter.

Depending on the severity of injuries or illnesses, Marines might be evacuated to rear areas or more extensive medical facilities on ships in the rear echelon. Given the amphibious nature of the Guadalcanal campaign, naval medical facilities aboard ships played a crucial role in treating wounded Raiders. Hospital ships and fleet hospitals provided more comprehensive medical care. A major hospital was established on the nearby island of Espiritu Santo¹¹⁵ that had been secured early in the campaign. The island was within flying distance and allowed serious cases to be evacuated to a secure area. For more severe cases, injured or sick Raiders were transported to hospitals in New Zealand¹¹⁶ or to the U.S. mainland for further treatment and rehabilitation. Raiders who suffered injuries during the patrol would undergo rehabilitation to recover physical and mental capabilities. This might involve physical therapy, occupational therapy, and other forms of medical and psychological support.¹¹⁷ Depending on the severity of injuries or illnesses, Marines would either return to duty after recovery or be discharged if their condition prevented them from continuing their military responsibilities.¹¹⁸

It is important to note that medical practices and facilities were less advanced during World War II than today. The recovery process often depended on the availability

¹¹⁵ Roddis, *Naval Medical Experience and Lessons in the Conquest of Guadalcanal*, 2.

¹¹⁶ Roddis, *Naval Medical Experience and Lessons in the Conquest of Guadalcanal*, 3.

¹¹⁷ Thomas Helling, *Desperate Surgery in the Pacific War: Doctors and damage control for American wounded, 1941-1945*(Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2017), 43.

¹¹⁸ Thomas Helling, *Desperate Surgery in the Pacific War: Doctors and damage control for American wounded, 1941-1945*(Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2017), 43.

of medical resources, the severity of injuries, and the overall logistical situation in the theater of operations. The challenges of providing medical care in the Pacific, with its vast distances and difficult conditions, were significant during this period.

In Table 2 the numbers of the 2nd Raiders are depicted for January 1943 after completing the Long Patrol. Table 3 depicts the difference from the muster rolls of November 1942.

Table 2. 2nd Marine Raider Battalion muster rolls, January 1943.¹¹⁹

Unit	Marine Officers	Marine Enlisted	Navy Officers	Navy Enlisted	Totals
Jan '43					
HQ Company	9	99	4	1	113
A Company	2	115	0	3	120
B Company	2	100	0	3	105
C Company	2	101	0	3	106
D Company	2	107	0	3	112
E Company	3	106	0	3	112
F Company	2	110	0	3	115
Battalion	22	738	4	19	783

Table 3. Muster roll decrease, Nov '42-Jan 1943.

Unit	Marine Officers	Marine Enlisted	Navy Officers	Navy Enlisted	Totals
HQ Company	2	45	0	0	47
A Company	2	24	0	0	26
B Company	1	38	0	0	39
C Company	1	31	0	-1	31
D Company	2	13	0	0	15
E Company	1	26	0	0	27
F Company	2	21	0	0	23
Battalion	11	198	0	-1	208

¹¹⁹ Muster Rolls, Jan 1942, "Records Relating to United States Marine Corps Operations in World War II, 1939-1949," (United States National Archives, accessed October 30, 2023).

Following the Long Patrol, the 2nd Raider Battalion lost 208 Marines. The losses and the continued illness of many others significantly hampered the battalion. Since the battalion was disbanded a year after the 2nd Raiders left Guadalcanal, some who required a more prolonged recovery could not rejoin but were placed in other units. The manpower deficiencies within the 2nd Raiders would have to be corrected through the replacement process, bringing in newly trained Marines to fill the role of Raiders while schooling the new Marines to become Raiders. The original 2nd Raiders trained for six grueling months as a battalion before their first combat action. The replacements started arriving at the end of February. Still, due to so many of the veterans being unfit, it took several weeks for training to begin progressing to the level expected of Raider battalions.

After the 2nd Raiders were relieved on Guadalcanal, members of the battalion continued to suffer from the lingering effects of the diseases. Oscar Peatross, now the battalion Operations officer, wrote: “By the third week in January – a month after our return from Guadalcanal – at least half of the battalion was suffering from one or more of a variety of ailments: recurrent malaria, jaundice, dengue fever, dysentery, and a variety of tropical skin ailments. As the sick list grew, morale slumped, and for all practical purposes, the battalion was noneffective.”¹²⁰ It would take a few more months before the 2nd Raiders were healthy enough and received enough replacements to begin training for their following combat action that would occur in September. During this recovery period, the U.S. conducted combat actions on New Guinea, New Georgia, Vangunu, and Rendova. Due to the unfitness of many of the battalion members for combat, the 2nd Raiders was unable to participate in such actions. Had they taken better measures to

¹²⁰ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 171.

preserve the battalion on Guadalcanal, such as implementing proper hygiene and disease prevention methods, it may have made a difference and allowed for further use of the 2nd Raiders in other combat actions throughout the Solomon Island campaign. However, despite these setbacks, the 2nd Raiders were ready for combat by the time they returned.

Chapter VIII.

Analysis and Conclusion

While it is difficult to give a definitive answer, we can say that the immense sacrifice of the 2nd Marine Raider Battalion during the Long Patrol contributed to the eventual successful capture of the island of Guadalcanal and prepared the United States for further actions against the Imperial Japanese forces in the South Pacific. The evidence of the Long Patrol's success is the Imperial Japanese Army's inability to mount a major offensive following the patrol. But while the Long Patrol was a success, the preservation of the battalion could have received more emphasis to prevent some of the diseases that prolonged the recovery and combat fitness of the 2nd Raiders.

The 2nd Raider Battalion was vital in the pivotal Battle of Guadalcanal. With its capture, the U.S. gained forward air and naval bases, enabling the U.S. to threaten Japanese supply lines and control vital sea routes. The successful recapture of the island marked a turning point, signaling that the Allies could stop the Japanese advance. The airfields on Guadalcanal, notably Henderson Field, were crucial for regional air superiority. The possession of these airfields allowed the Allies to launch air raids against Japanese positions and shipping, disrupting Japanese operations and protecting their own naval and ground forces. The campaign provided valuable lessons in planning, coordination, and execution of amphibious operations, influencing subsequent campaigns in the Pacific theater. Guadalcanal had a profound psychological impact on both the Allies and the Japanese. The ferocity and tenacity displayed by both sides during the intense and prolonged fighting contributed to the perception that the Pacific War would

be a long and challenging campaign. While not solely responsible, the Long Patrol played a part in the overall operation and had many significant successes.

The Long Patrol gathered intelligence about Japanese positions, strengths, and intentions on Guadalcanal. The information collected by the Raiders was crucial for Allied commanders in planning subsequent operations and determining the overall strategy for the Guadalcanal Campaign. The success of Carlson's Patrol, including its ability to engage the enemy effectively and survive in the jungle, provided a much-needed boost to the morale of the Allied forces on Guadalcanal. The Marines were now taking the fight to the enemy. The Raiders demonstrated their ability to operate behind enemy lines in challenging conditions, instilling confidence in their capabilities. The Raiders established an effective relationship with the Coastwatchers and friendly native populations, gaining support and information from local scouts.

The 2nd Raider Battalion used unconventional warfare tactics during the patrol, disrupting Japanese supply lines and causing confusion among enemy forces. They conducted hit-and-run attacks, ambushing Japanese patrols and destroying supplies, which significantly hampered the Japanese ability to reinforce their positions on the island. Carlson's use of guerrilla tactics, inspired by Chinese Communist tactics he had observed, demonstrated the effectiveness of unconventional warfare in the Pacific theater. The Long Patrol showcased the adaptability of Raiders and contributed to a shift in strategic thinking about conducting operations in the challenging jungle environment. The Raiders faced numerous challenges during the Long Patrol, including harsh weather, limited supplies, disease, and constant encounters with the enemy. Their actions resulted in killing 488 and likely wounding others, but even greater importance was the aggressive

action that forced the Imperial Japanese forces to defend against them. Despite the many challenges, the 2nd Raiders demonstrated remarkable cohesion and resilience. This experience fostered a strong sense of camaraderie and unit cohesion among the members of the 2nd Raider Battalion. Lessons learned from the patrol, including the importance of reconnaissance, guerrilla warfare, and adapting to the environment, influenced future Raider and Marine Corps operations in the Pacific.

Although the Long Patrol, the 2nd Raider Battalion, and the Guadalcanal campaign were all vital to the overall U.S. strategy in the Pacific, there were several mistakes made that could have better positioned the 2nd Raiders for future operations. “Our sick list continued to grow and finally attracted the attention of I MAC (I Marine Amphibious Corps) Headquarters. In the second week of March [1943], LtCol Joe Burger, the Corps personnel officer, and the I MAC staff surgeon flew in from New Caledonia to investigate. With the assistance of our medical personnel, the staff surgeon gave every man a physical examination, and shortly thereafter, the battalion was declared medically unfit for combat duty.”¹²¹ Preventative hygiene, such as washing utensils before meals or taking preventative medication, was not given enough attention, leading to the outbreak and spread of diseases. Although some responsibility lies with individual Raiders, leadership needs to ensure that hygiene practices are followed during patrols, especially as fatigue sets in. Disease prevention measures, like washing utensils and feet, changing socks regularly, and covering areas that mosquitoes can access, are tedious but essential for force preservation. The Raiders learned about these practices but found it challenging to implement them fully, perhaps due to machismo or a lack of understanding

¹²¹ Peatross, *Bless 'em All*, 173.

of how diseases can spread quickly and have a significant impact. Some were also unaware of anti-malarial pills and other preventative methods. As a result, a third of the battalion was evacuated due to disease, prompting Carlson to recommend improved field hygiene and preventative medicine in his reports to Headquarters Marine Corps.

The 2nd Raider Battalion conducted themselves well under highly challenging circumstances to successfully complete their assigned mission. General Vandegrift in his Final Report on the Guadalcanal Operation best summed up the 2nd Raider's actions, "This was a remarkable performance even for fresh, well-trained troops and the methods employed are worthy of study", he further stated, "any troops operating in jungle warfare would be well advised to adopt many of the practices and methods employed by this battalion."¹²² The Long Patrol substantially contributed to ensuring the success of the Guadalcanal campaign in its ability to disrupt the Japanese advances in the Pacific. The leadership of the 2nd Raiders, starting with LtCol Carlson, could have done better in ensuring the health of their Raiders. Sanitation of mess kits and eating utensils was already proven to prevent dysentery. Without dysentery affecting the immune and digestive systems of the Raiders, they may have been more effective on the patrol and contracted fewer severe diseases. The antimalarial pills would have prevented the bulk of the most prevalent of the serious diseases. With more foresight into disease prevention, the elite 2nd Raider Battalion would have been better prepared for success in future operations.

¹²² Gen Alexander A. Vandegrift, *Division Commander's Final Report on Guadalcanal Operation* (Washington, D. C.: Headquarters Marine Corps, 1943), 37-38.



Figure 8. 2nd Raiders after the Long Patrol

LtCol Carlson is center front. Raiders are displaying captured Japanese items after the successful Long Patrol and getting back to the relative safety in the Henderson Field perimeter. (Collection 1943)

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