

Wednesday, April 22, 1942

## Jap Night Attacks Opened Fatal Breach in Bataan Line

*Frank Hewlett witnessed the Battle of Bataan from beginning to end and was evacuated from the Philippines to Australia in a U. S. bomber. He tells in this dispatch the detailed story of how our Bataan line was cracked.*

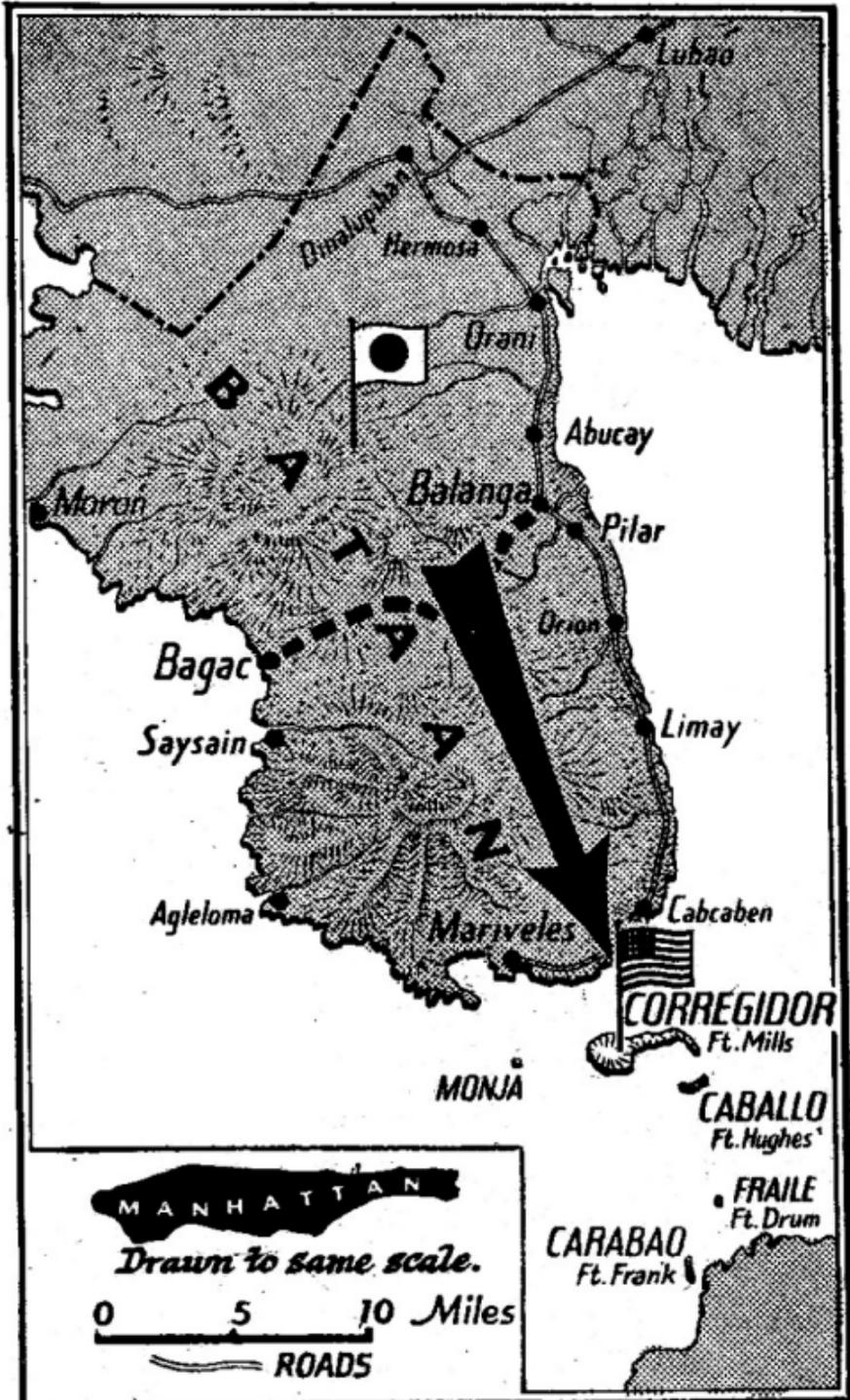
By FRANK HEWLETT  
United Press Staff Correspondent

GEN. MACARTHUR'S HEADQUARTERS, MELBOURNE, Apr. 22.—Japanese night infiltrations through Bataan's barbed-wire defenses finally cracked the American-Filipino line just right of the center, opening the way for a land and air assault that overwhelmed Lt. Gen. Wainwright's sick and weary army.

Night after night, Japanese armed with light tommy guns which held clips of 30 cartridges — each man carried five clips — would slip through the barbed-wire. After making slight gains they would dig in. With the coming of daylight our troops would drive them back and repair the wire.

Then, when they were ready for the final push, the Japanese raided the same regiment's sector several nights in greater force. One morning there were too many of them for the Americans and Filipinos to clear out. The next night enemy reinforcements poured through the break and also dug in. That was the beginning of the end.

The Japanese came through in full force from then on. They did not stop to consolidate gains once they passed the line, which stretched 13 miles across the peninsula tip of Bataan. Instead, they threw in a constant stream of fresh troops and airplanes, giving Wainwright no time to dig in for the last stand he had planned.



# Breach in Bataan

It takes time even for healthy troops to set up artillery in new positions, and it may well be imagined what a tedious job it was for our men who worked until they collapsed trying to get their heavy field pieces away from a line they had held two months.

Many questions have been asked about Japanese tactics, equipment and morale on Bataan. Here are the answers to some, on the basis of what I observed:

**Hand-to-hand fighting:** There were few bayonet battles on Bataan, and our troops more than held their own in them. Filipino and American troops displayed superior rifle marksmanship throughout. Only Japanese officers and a few non-commissioned officers carried swords and they were seldom in use. Some of the captured Japanese swords were jewel-studded and elaborately tooled.

**Snipers:** Japanese snipers were effective in harassing our troops and took a toll among U. S. officers, but their poor marksmanship prevented them from becoming a serious problem. They missed many chances to get our men along the rough trails.

**Tanks:** The country was ill suited to tank fighting, but the American models proved more effective, and occasionally did a good job of smashing through bamboo thickets to wipe out machine gun nests.

**Fliers:** Japanese Navy fliers proved superior to Japanese Army fliers in the Battle of Luzon. They were generally credited with destroying the Cavite Navy Yard and knocking out the important Nichols and Clark airfields. Most American officers believed that the Navy fliers would be used in the Battle of Bataan but when the final push started only the usual Army planes appeared, along with 27 heavy, twin-motored bombers of a new type which pounded Bataan and Corregidor. These new ones flew higher than usual and when one was shot down by anti-aircraft gunners one of our gunboat crews went out into Manila Bay and retrieved a wheel from it. The printing on the tire showed it was made last December, indicating that the newest and best equipment was in use.

**Fighting spirit:** It was proved that the Japanese will surrender, but voluntary prisoners are rare. Most of the voluntaries had been wounded in battle, or cut off and caught sick and hungry after many attempts to return through our lines to rejoin their forces. The last prisoner taken before the fall of Bataan was a soldier who had wandered 53 days inside our lines. He was with a crack regiment that had landed from the China Sea at the rear of our lines and managed to escape the annihilation which befell most of the regiment. He had lived in the jungle eating fresh water shrimps, snails and roots, and when captured weighed 80 pounds and was barely able to walk.

## Used Firecracker Stunt

On examining packs of dead Japanese soldiers I found bottles of big quinine tablets—the lack of which had much to do with our own men's defeat—and some carried pills which our doctors said were a mixture of quinine and aspirin. Some had water filters, showing how carefully the campaign was planned.

They were tricky. One of their tactics was to shoot off firecrackers, beat drums and yell loudly when attacking, to give the impression that they were an immense force.

Our Abucay-Moron line, some six miles north of the Balanga-Bagac line, had been broken in January largely through infiltration tactics, and with that line, the de-

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fenders lost the use of the important Balanga-Bagac highway over which the Japanese moved reinforcements for their final push.

Our men lost artillery control over the entrance to Subic Bay in that January withdrawal and the Japanese were able to land reinforcements there. **It was reported the transport ships loaded scrap iron, automobiles, sugar, rice and other loot to take back on the homeward trips.**

*PM*