

# Alamo Scouts Training Center



To whom \_\_\_\_\_  
 40th Infantry \_\_\_\_\_  
 of instruction \_\_\_\_\_  
 from 15 \_\_\_\_\_  
 of his proficiency \_\_\_\_\_  
 Remarks \_\_\_\_\_

Specific Area \_\_\_\_\_  
 Date June 22, 1944  
 CONNELL Sgt. 38087930  
 completed the prescribed course  
 TRAINING CENTER  
 is awarded in recognition  
 included in the course.



McGowen Team after the 1st Alamo Scout mission, the reconnaissance of Los Negros Island, New Guinea, 27-28 Feb 1944.

General Krueger.  
 W. Bradshaw  
 Colonel, G.S.C.  
 Director of Training

## Alamo Scouts Diary

By Kenneth Finlayson

**Inserted** at 7:00 p.m. by Navy PT boat onto the deserted beach, the small team moved stealthily along the trail until it reached its objective at 2:00 a.m. Two local guides were sent into the tiny village to obtain the latest information on the enemy disposition and ascertain the status of the personnel held hostage there. On the guide's return, the team leader modified his original plan based on their information and the men dispersed to take up their positions.

The leader with six team members, the interpreter, and three local guides moved to the vicinity of a large building where eighteen enemy soldiers slept inside. Two team members and one native guide took up a position near a small building occupied by two enemy intelligence officers and a captured local official. The assistant team leader, four men, and two guides were to neutralize an enemy outpost located more than two miles away on the main road to the village. The outpost was manned by four soldiers with two machine guns. This team would attack when they heard the main element initiate their assault in the village.

The team leader opened fire on the main building at 4:10 a.m. and within three minutes his team killed or wounded all the enemy combatants. The two enemy officers in the small hut were killed and their hostage released. In the village, the interpreter and the native guides went from hut to hut gathering the sixty-six civilian hostages. As soon as everyone was accounted for, the group began moving to the pickup point on the beach. The assistant team leader and his men were unable to hear the brief gun

battle in the village and waited until 5:30 before attacking the guard post from two sides, killing the four enemy soldiers. After neutralizing the guard post, the team moved to the pick-up point, secured the area, and made radio contact to bring in the boats for the evacuation. The main body with the newly-freed hostages soon arrived. By 7:00 a.m., everyone was safely inside friendly lines.<sup>1</sup>

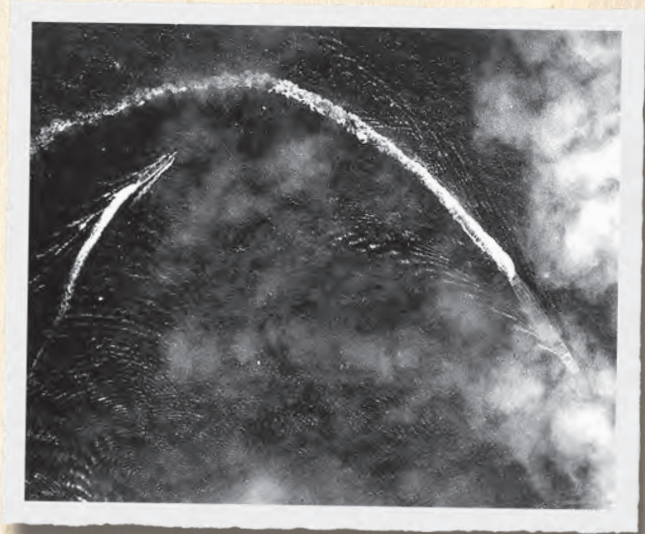
This well-planned, flawlessly executed hostage rescue could easily have come from today's war on terrorism. In reality, it took place on 4 October 1944 at Cape Oransbari, New Guinea. The team that rescued sixty-six Dutch and Javanese hostages from the Japanese were part of the Sixth U.S. Army's Special Reconnaissance Unit, called the Alamo Scouts. This article will look at the formation, training, and missions of that unique special operations unit.

## The Japanese Advance

Following the 7 December 1941 attack on Pearl Harbor, the Japanese military was on the march. The Imperial Army had been fighting in Manchuria since 1931 and was a veteran, battle-tested force. The Japanese grand strategy was to drive the European nations from their colonial holdings in Asia and implement the Greater East Asia Co-Prosperity Sphere, an involuntary assembly of Asian nations under Japanese domination. In December 1941, Nazi Germany occupied the Netherlands and France,



*Nellist Team after the Oransbari Rescue mission. Pictured L to R, back row, Andy E. Smith, Galen C. Kittleson, William E. Nellist, kneeling, front row, Wilbert C. Wismer, Sabas A. Asis and Thomas A. Siason. Taken New Years Day, 1945 on Leyte, Philippine Islands.*



*The Japanese aircraft carrier Akagi was sunk by aerial attack at the Battle of Midway. To the left a Japanese destroyer maneuvers to avoid the American aircraft. The defeat at Midway spelled the end of the Japanese expansion.*

and the British Commonwealth was locked in a struggle with the Axis. The United States was preoccupied with building up its own military forces and providing war materials to the embattled British. Japan chose this time to launch their attack on Pearl Harbor, and begin offensive operations throughout East Asia. The initial months of the war were a string of unbroken Japanese victories.

August 1942 was the high-water mark for the Japanese military. The Imperial Army captured Malaya and



*General Douglas A. MacArthur's Southwest Pacific Area. The red line shows the limit of advance of the Japanese military in 1942. MacArthur's campaign strategy was to retake New Guinea and move north and recapture the Philippines prior to the assault on the Japanese home islands.*

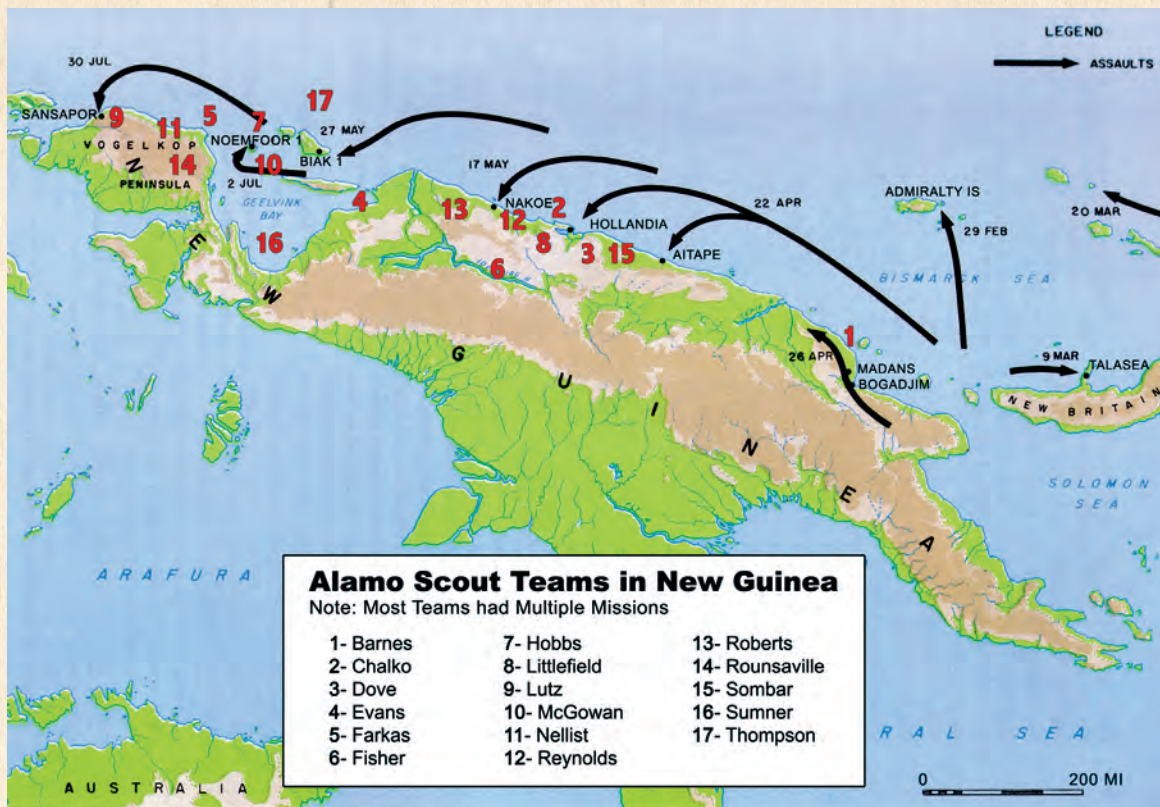
Singapore, occupied Borneo, Sumatra, and Java in the Dutch East Indies, and marched into Thailand. They pushed the British out of Burma, and dealt the United States a major defeat in the Philippines. Japanese forces swept south and east into New Guinea, where they established major bases at Rabaul on New Britain Island, and Tulagi in the Solomon Group and occupied the Marshall and Gilbert Islands in eastern Micronesia. They pushed north to seize Attu and Kiska in the Aleutians. Their forces were threatening Australia when the U.S. Navy decisively defeated the Japanese Navy at the Battle of Midway in June 1942. On 7 August 1942, the United States and her allies attacked Guadalcanal, Tulagi, and Tanambogo, effectively checking further Japanese expansion.<sup>2</sup> From this point on, the Japanese were forced to adopt a defensive posture to consolidate their holdings and prepare to fight off the growing strength of the Allies.

Maritime operations against the Japanese took place in two theaters. The Southeast Asia Command was under British control and led by Admiral Lord Louis Mountbatten. The Pacific Theater was divided into two areas. The largest was the vast Pacific Ocean Areas (POA) commanded by Admiral (ADM) Chester W. Nimitz, the Commander in Chief, Pacific Fleet, The POA extended from the continental United States westward across the ocean to Japan and included most of the Pacific

islands. The South Pacific area was commanded by Rear Admiral Robert L. Ghormley. The second subdivision, the Southwest Pacific Area (SWPA), encompassed Australia, New Guinea, the Dutch East Indies, and the Philippines and was under the command of General (GEN) Douglas A. MacArthur.<sup>3</sup> It was in the SWPA that the Alamo Scouts were created and operated.

### *The SWPA and Sixth Army*

After his evacuation from the Philippines to Australia in March 1942, GEN MacArthur, was installed as the Commander in Chief of the SWPA, a joint command composed of United States, Australian, and Dutch forces. Of the major theaters of World War II, only the China-Burma-India Theater (CBI) was more poorly resourced than the SWPA. MacArthur's General Headquarters (GHQ) directed three subordinate sections, the Allied Air Forces (Lieutenant General George C. Kenney, U.S. Army Air Forces), Allied Land Forces (General Sir Thomas A. Blamey, Australian Army) and the Allied Naval Forces, (Rear Admiral Arthur S. Carpender, U.S. Navy).<sup>4</sup> In January 1943, MacArthur specifically requested that his long-standing friend Lieutenant General (LTG) Walter Krueger be assigned to command the newly constituted Sixth Army.<sup>5</sup> In a move designed to keep the bulk of the American ground troops separate from the Allied Land



The campaign in New Guinea. LTG Krueger's Alamo Force executed a series of amphibious landings along the northern coast of New Guinea. The Alamo Scouts conducted 40 reconnaissance missions on the landing beaches and the off-shore islands in support of Alamo Force.

Forces, MacArthur established a new command, the New Britain Force, around the Sixth U.S. Army, reporting directly to SWPA GHQ.<sup>6</sup> The name was soon changed to the Alamo Force, because Sixth Army originally stood up in San Antonio, Texas, the home of the Alamo. LTG Krueger noted:

*The reason for creating Alamo Force and having it, rather than Sixth Army, conducting operations was not divulged to me. But it was plain that this arrangement would obviate placing Sixth Army under the operational control of the CG, Allied Land Forces, although that Army formed a part of these forces. Since the CG, Allied Land Forces, likewise could not exercise administrative control of Sixth Army, it never came under his command at all.<sup>7</sup>*

General MacArthur's strategy in the SWPA was to conduct a series of amphibious landings along the northern coast of New Guinea, capture the Japanese-held islands of the New Britain archipelago and destroy the major Japanese naval base at Rabaul. This would eliminate the Japanese threat to Australia and begin the process of recapturing the Philippines prior to assaulting the Japanese home islands. From July through September, 1942, Australian troops on New Guinea fought the Japanese between Port Moresby and the northern coast. The attack followed the treacherous Kokoda Trail across the towering Owen Stanley Mountains. The enemy's final attempt to consolidate his holdings on New Guinea's northern coast was repulsed at Milne Bay.<sup>9</sup> Fierce fighting led to Allied victories at Buna, Gona, and Sanananda. The Japanese penetration along the New Guinea coast and the occupation of Solomon Islands were disrupted. The Allies began to roll them back when the Sixth Army commenced operations.

The Japanese still occupied the majority of northeastern New Guinea, with strongholds at Lae and Salamaua. LTG Krueger's Alamo Force launched an offensive in June 1943, landing on Woodlark and Kiriwina islands on 30 June.<sup>10</sup> Airfields were rapidly built on these islands. The Allies began to move methodically up the northeastern coast of New Guinea, capturing Lae and Salamaua and executing amphibious landings further westward. For the Army,



L to R: LTG Walter Krueger, MG Franklin C. Sibert, RADM William M. Fechetler, BG Charles E. Hardis, New Guinea. General MacArthur said of General Krueger, "He was swift and sure in attack; tenacious and determined in defense; modest and restrained in victory-I don't know what he would have been in defeat because he was never defeated."

When LTG Krueger arrived in Australia in February, 1943, Sixth Army contained I Corps, the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Infantry Divisions, the 1<sup>st</sup> Marine Division (under Army operational control), the 158<sup>th</sup> Infantry Regiment, the 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment, the 40<sup>th</sup> and 41<sup>st</sup> Antiaircraft Brigades, the 98<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion, (Pack) and the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Special Brigade. The 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry and 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Divisions joined Sixth Army in May and July, 1943 respectively. By November 1944, prior to the invasion of the Philippines, the Alamo Force (Sixth Army) had grown considerably. It now included the X Corps composed of the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division, the 24<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division and the 6<sup>th</sup> Cavalry Regiment and the XXIVth Corps, made up of the 7<sup>th</sup> and 96<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions, the 11<sup>th</sup> Airborne Division, the 20<sup>th</sup> Armored Group, and the 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Infantry Regiment. Included in the Sixth Army troop lists were the 32<sup>nd</sup> and 77<sup>th</sup> Infantry Divisions, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Engineer Special Brigade, the 21<sup>st</sup> and 381<sup>st</sup> Infantry Regiments and the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion.<sup>8</sup>



Troops of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry Division cross a bridge in the jungle during the battle of Buna in New Guinea, November 1942. The 32<sup>nd</sup> was a Sixth Army unit in the Alamo Force.

amphibious operations on this large scale were a new experience, and there were many lessons to be learned. It was during the conduct of these early battles that LTG Krueger saw the need for more accurate timely intelligence, and ground reconnaissance of the landing areas.

### The Birth of the Alamo Scouts

Intelligence about the enemy disposition and the conditions on the ground on the New Guinea mainland were hard to come by. Aerial overflights were not effective in piercing the thick jungle that began at the edge of the beaches, and there was no human intelligence network in place in the Japanese-occupied areas. In the other theaters of World War II, the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) provided much of this tactical intelligence. Douglas A. MacArthur specifically prohibited the OSS from conducting operations in the SWPA. He would not allow any organizations in his theater that did not report directly to him.<sup>11</sup> In July 1942, in an attempt to address the intelligence shortfalls, GEN MacArthur established an organization to collect information through clandestine operations behind enemy lines. The Allied Intelligence Bureau (AIB) incorporated several loosely-knit organizations, including the Australian "Coast Watchers" and made an effort to insert agents with radios by submarine.<sup>12</sup> The Navy also established a short-lived organization, the Amphibious Scouts, on Fergusson Island in July 1943 to conduct reconnaissance of the landing beaches. The Amphibious Scouts included several Army personnel. The unit was disbanded in December 1943. The innovative Krueger, conscious of the intelligence failures that occurred before the battles on Kiska Island in the Aleutians and at Guadalcanal, took steps to acquire his own intelligence gathering capability.<sup>13</sup>

LTG Krueger said, "The trouble that we had met in getting information of the enemy and our objective area



Australian "Coast Watchers" in late 1943. The civilian Coast Watchers were later incorporated into the Australian Navy and were a vital part of MacArthur's Allied Intelligence Bureau. One of the few American Coast Watchers, Frank Nash, is seated on the right, bottom row.

LTC Frederick Bradshaw (r) with LTC Sylvester Smith of Sixth Army G-2 on the boat dock at the Alamo Scout Training Center (ASTC), Fergusson Island, New Guinea. Bradshaw, a lawyer from Mississippi, formed the ASTC and served as the first director.



prompted me to issue orders on 28 November 1943 establishing a training center near Headquarters, Alamo Force for training selected individuals in reconnaissance and raider work.<sup>14</sup> Sixth Army General Order 353-B established the Alamo Scout Training Center (ASTC) to provide trained reconnaissance troops to Sixth Army units. Krueger shrewdly used his prerogative as an Army commander to establish a training center instead of trying to create a new unit, an option that required approval by the Army General Staff. Krueger also converted the 98<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (Pack) into the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion when the need for a raiding capability was identified.

LTC Frederick W. Bradshaw, the Sixth Army Assistant G-2 was selected to command the ASTC. The self-effacing former lawyer from Mississippi was initially assisted by Major (MAJ) John F. Polk from the 1<sup>st</sup> Cavalry Division. Polk soon moved into the role of liaison with Sixth Army Headquarters and Bradshaw picked Captain (CPT) Homer A. Williams to be his executive officer. A gruff personality and a strict disciplinarian, Williams was the perfect counter-weight to the quiet, good-humored Bradshaw. Bradshaw made equally good choices with his other staff officers.

A critical position in establishing and maintaining the school was the supply officer. Bradshaw recruited First Lieutenant (1LT) Mayo S. Stuntz who had served in the Amphibious Scouts. An inveterate “scrounger”, Stuntz was able to work wonders in the logistically constrained environment of the SWPA, provided, “no questions were asked.”<sup>15</sup> In addition to building his staff, Bradshaw was on the look-out for a location for the school. It was likely to be a “bare-bones” operation.

The Sixth Army orders establishing the ASTC required Bradshaw to have the school set-up and training its first class by 1 January 1944 at a location in the vicinity of Sixth Army Headquarters, then on Goodenough Island off the east coast of New Guinea. The mosquito-infested swamps and rough surf around Goodenough Island offered no suitable locations for the school. On 30 November, Bradshaw dispatched two former Amphibious Scouts, Lieutenants Daily P. Gambill and Milton Beckworth, and two enlisted men to follow up a rumor that the Navy reconnaissance unit was being disbanded. They had a camp on Fergusson Island.<sup>16</sup> The rumor proved true, and on 3 December 1943, Bradshaw and his staff moved to what would be the first of five homes of the ASTC. The school would run until after the end of the war, closing in September 1945.

The native village of Kalo Kalo sits on a quiet bay on the northwest coast of Fergusson Island. Only a 30-minute boat ride from Sixth Army Headquarters, the spot was ideal. It provided good areas for training in the jungle surrounding the village and easy access to the ocean for amphibious training in rubber boats. LTG Krueger sent construction engineers to build classrooms, a supply room, boat docks and a 50-man dining hall, all properly screened with cement floors. 1LT Stuntz “found” a kerosene-powered refrigerator, generators, and electric lights for the camp, a radio and movie projector for the dayroom, and a host of other amenities. 1LT William Barnes, who graduated in the first class recalled, “We had a wonderful setup on Fergusson Island. It was the nicest of all the camps. Stuntz rigged up a latrine and even managed to find a couple of toilet seats. That’s probably the reason the men called the camp the ‘Hotel Alamo’.”<sup>17</sup>

As the construction of the camp continued, LTC Bradshaw began to fill out his instructor corps. The demise of the Amphibious Scouts provided him with several soldiers who had served in the Navy recon unit.

*“the men called the camp the ‘Hotel Alamo’.”*

—1LT William Barnes

On 27 December 1943, a month after the order establishing the ASTC, the first class of Alamo Scouts began training at Fergusson Island.

### *Alamo Scout Training and Selection*

Candidates for the Alamo Scouts came from units within the Sixth Army, initially from the 32<sup>nd</sup> Infantry



*Amphibious Scouts SSI*



*98th Field Artillery Battalion Patch*



*6th Ranger Battalion Scroll*

Division (32<sup>nd</sup> ID) and 158<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team (the Bushmasters). The Scouts were all volunteers, and units were tasked to screen candidates for suitability prior to sending their names forward. LTG Krueger's influence was felt down to the lowest level. 1LT Robert Sumner volunteered for the Scouts in April 1944. "The Army Commander, General Krueger, insisted on quality people to begin with, and took a personal interest that quality people were made available. This is very clearly stated in his original order. So the commanders knew that the old man would look askance on this thing if a bunch of turkeys kept turning up all the time. So, you got a pretty good guy," said Sumner.<sup>18</sup>

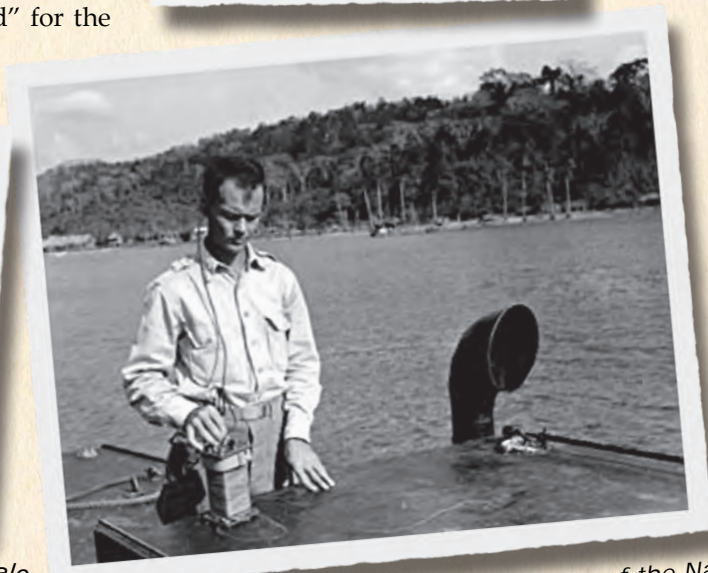
Nineteen year-old Private First Class (PFC) Galen C. Kittleson won a Silver Star on Noemfoor Island with the 503<sup>rd</sup> Parachute Infantry. He "volunteered" for the Alamo Scouts with little knowledge of



1LT Mayo Stuntz with 1LT Rafael Ileta at the last ASTC on Luzon, Philippine Islands. Stuntz was the ASTC Supply Officer renowned for his ability to "scrounge necessities." Rafael Ileta was a West Point graduate who later rose to be Chief of Staff of the Philippine Army and Secretary of National Defense.



The first Alamo Scout Training Center at Kalo Kalo was nicknamed the "Hotel Alamo." The industrious 1LT Mayo Stuntz had provided the camp with refrigeration, electricity, and other amenities not seen in the SWPA Theater. The sign travelled to subsequent camps.



1LT Myron Beckwith was an Army veteran of the Navy's Amphibious Scouts. As an instructor at the ASTC, he demonstrates the operation of a special waterproof radio to be used by the reconnaissance teams.



Major Homer "Red" Williams was the executive officer for LTC Bradshaw before becoming the ASTC director. A no-nonsense disciplinarian, Williams was an effective counter-part to the soft-spoken Bradshaw.



Trainees at the first Alamo Scout Training Center on Fergusson Island, New Guinea. The training center would be established in five separate locations in New Guinea and the Philippines as the Southwest Pacific Campaign unfolded. A total of eight classes were completed, and a ninth was cut short in September 1945, after the Japanese surrender.



There were five separate Alamo Scout Training Centers established between December 1943 and September 1945.

Camp 1 - Kalo Kalo on Fergusson Island, New Guinea.

27 Dec 43 – 31 Mar 44, Classes 1 and 2.

Camp 2 - Mange Point, Finschafen, New Guinea.

15 May 44 – 22 Jun 44, Class 3.

Camp 3 - Cape Kassoe, Hollandia, New Guinea.

31 Jul 44 – 28 Oct 44, Classes 4 and 5.

Camp 4 - Abuyog, Leyte, Philippines.

26 Dec 44 – 1 Jun 45, Class 6.

Camp 5 - Mabayo (Subic Bay), Luzon, Philippines.

23 Apr 45 – 2 Sep 45, Classes 7 and 8.

the unit. "I and a Lieutenant Cole from the 503<sup>rd</sup> were told, 'We are going to send you to a recon school because you are a scout.' I didn't really know what the hell the Alamo Scouts were. I thought, well I suppose the more I can learn, the better off I'll be. They really didn't say it was voluntary, either."<sup>19</sup> SGT Zeke (Chief Thunderbird) McConnell, a Native American Cherokee with the 40<sup>th</sup> Infantry Division on New Britain recalls "My Colonel came up and said, 'You're an Indian. How would you like to go to Scout training? Then you can come back and show us how to do it.'"<sup>20</sup> Unfortunately for the Colonel, McConnell remained with the Alamo Scouts when he completed the course. Volunteer or not, everyone went through a rigorous six-week training program.

The Alamo Scout course was designed to maximize the soldier's ability to penetrate behind enemy lines and gather accurate, timely intelligence. Heavy emphasis was placed on the skills necessary for a successful recon patrol. 1LT Robert Sumner went through the ASTC after attending a company commander's course at Fort



*The Alamo Scout Training Center at Cape Kassoe, Hollandia, New Guinea. Classes #4 and 5 were run from this facility between August and November 1944. Later training centers were not as plush as the original "Hotel Alamo."*

Benning, GA. "The training program [at the ASTC] was an advanced sort of proposition. We had all the basic training, of course, in map reading, area photography, individual weapons. However, at the Scout Training Center, your training was detail work on reading maps and reading aerial photography."<sup>21</sup> The nature of the Scout mission, amphibious insertion onto the landing beaches, dictated that a major portion of the training be devoted to the use of rubber boats.

The Alamo Scouts depended on small inflatable rubber boats (RB-7's) for their entry into enemy territory. "I think the rubber boat training was the easiest part, but we practiced it a lot," said Galen Kittleson. "We went out into the ocean and worked with those waves coming in. Because if you don't know a little bit about it, you turn sideways and you're automatically capsized."<sup>22</sup>

Scouts were also expected to be proficient open water swimmers. Corporal (CPL) Andrew E. Smith remembers an unusual training exercise. "There were two taped off areas in the bay. You went under water at one end and they [the cadre] told us, 'Now don't come up until you get to the other one because there are going to be bullets hitting the water.' It was ninety or a hundred yards."<sup>23</sup>

Every aspect of patrolling, including conducting operations in the tropical jungle, was addressed in the training. Sumner said "There was an Australian officer, a Lieutenant Ray Watson who was attached to the Scouts as one of the training cadre. He had his own native police boys with him. In their pidgin English, they gave us instruction in jungle survival."<sup>24</sup> 1LT Tom Rounsaville described the training "as nothing really new. It was just concentrated, a hell of a lot of physical stuff, a lot of work in the water because we were going to be working in the water a lot. And stuff like map reading and patrolling, [for] the first ten days or two weeks."<sup>25</sup> "The physical training aspect was called Ju-Jitsu, and we had a young fellow who was one of the very, very few American brown-belters. We're



talking the 1940's, and he was very good," said Robert Sumner.<sup>26</sup> Not everyone had a positive experience with the physical training. "They paired me with big Gib [Gilbert] Cox," said Andrew Smith. "He was a football player from Oregon State and he threw me around like a pretzel. Then he'd say, did I hurt you, Smitty?"<sup>27</sup>

The six week training program of the Alamo Scouts involved an initial period devoted to classroom and hands-on instruction. "The classroom portion was very detailed and went on until 2200 [hours] each night. [It was] four weeks of this training, from 0800 to 2200 at night. Classroom [work] with practical training on the ground. Then we went into a series of exercises," said

Robert Sumner.<sup>28</sup> Each class of students was divided into teams of one officer with five or six enlisted men and the members were rotated throughout the training. This was by design and supported one of the unique selection aspects of the Alamo Scouts.

1LT Robert Sumner went through the fourth class at the ASTC. "Everybody trained with everybody else during this entire period, so that you would get to know other men and they would get to know you. There was a logical reason for this, which we were unable to see to begin with."<sup>29</sup> The reason became clear when it was time to execute the culminating exercise of each class.



*A member of Littlefield Team, Native American SSG Zeke McConnell participated in over a dozen missions in New Guinea and the Philippines. Shown here after the war, Staff Sergeant McConnell wears the Alamo Scout patch on his right shoulder.*



*Alamo Scout training was arduous and intensive, concentrating on reconnaissance techniques and honing the men's ability to move through the jungle. Here trainees at the ASTC at Kalo Kalo conduct a forced march on Fergusson Island, New Guinea, February 1944.*



*LTG Walter Krueger congratulates SGT Gilbert Cox after awarding him the Silver Star. PFC Galen C. Kittleson, also a Silver Star recipient is in the background. Leyte, Philippines, 1944.*



*32nd Infantry Division SSI*



*158th Regimental Combat Team Patch*



*503rd Parachute Infantry Patch*



*40th Infantry Division SSI*

Trainees of ASTC Class #4 at Hollandia, New Guinea were instructed in Ju-Jitsu as part of the physical training program. The training was taught by one of the few Americans qualified in this form of martial arts.



Alamo Scout trainees had to swim an under-water course under fire. Here 1LT Preston Richard fires at the surface from the surface with a Thompson sub-machinegun. LTC Frederick Bradshaw, ASTC Director (hands on hips), and MG Innis P. Swift, commander of I Corps (in helmet) observe the training, ASTC Fergusson Island, January 1944.

In a rare example of a unit conducting training in enemy-occupied terrain, the Scouts ran their final exercise in disputed areas. "At the end of the class, they would break us out into teams and send us on a mission, usually into some of the areas that were recently taken over by us. I mean there were still some Japanese in them, but they were kind of a virgin area," said 1LT Tom Rounsaville.<sup>30</sup> Sergeant (SGT) Gilbert Cox remembers his team going onto the New Guinea mainland. "We ran a mission back to the Tami-Avery Trail that the Japanese were using



A Scout team at the 1st ASTC prepares to conduct a night reconnaissance. Front L-R, PFC Joseph Johnson, 1LT Michael Sombar and CPL David Milda. Back L-R, SGT Byron Tsingine, SSG Alvin Vilcan, CPL John A. Roberts, CPL Walter A. MacDonald and SSG Caesar Ramirez, 8 January 1944.

# Alamo Scouts Training Center



Southwest Pacific Area

Date June 22, 1944

To whom it may concern:

This is to certify that ZEKE McCONNELL Sgt. 38087930  
40th Infantry Division has successfully completed the proscribed course  
of instruction at the **ALAMO SCOUTS TRAINING CENTER**  
from 15 May to 22 June. This certificate is awarded in recognition  
of his proficiency in all subjects included in the course.

Remarks Excellent - ALAMO SCOUT

By command of Lieutenant General Quogor

*F. W. Bradshaw*  
**F. W. BRADSHAW**  
Colonel, G.S.C.

Director of Training

The graduation certificate of SGT Zeke McConnell of Littlefield Team. The certificate reads "Excellent-Alamo Scout." If the rating Excellent or Superior appeared on the certificate, the individual was retained on a Scout team. If not, he returned to his unit.



*An Alamo Scout Team, (most likely Dove Team) lands from a Landing Craft-Vehicle on the rocky coast near Tanahmerah Bay, New Guinea. The team was scouting the area prior to the amphibious landings to seize Hollandia, June 1944.*

to cross the Owen Stanley Mountains. We saw a few dead guys that didn't make it."<sup>31</sup> At the conclusion of these exercises, each man was given an opportunity to evaluate his fellow classmates.

Using a secret ballot, each enlisted man was asked to rank in order of preference, the officer he would most like to serve under, and the five other enlisted men he wanted on his team. Officers were asked to provide the names of five enlisted men they would like to have on their team, in rank order. CPL Andrew Smith said, "I was to put on a piece of paper, the person I would most like to associate with on missions. Of course, there wasn't a man who graduated that I wouldn't gladly go with."<sup>32</sup> These peer evaluations were combined with a cadre assessment of each man. The projected mission requirements of Sixth Army determined who and how many Alamo Scouts would come from each class.<sup>33</sup> Who was selected was not revealed until the graduation ceremony.

"On graduation day, we formed up in platoons, about an eight or nine-man squad with the lieutenant standing at the end. All the cadre officers were there, all lined up neatly. The director of training would make a few remarks, you know, the usual hype, and then the graduation exercise would start. The young officer was called forward. He marches up, salutes the director, and receives his diploma. And this was the first time you would know if you had been selected," said Robert Sumner.<sup>34</sup> If the words "Superior or Excellent - Alamo Scout" appeared on the diploma, the man was retained at the ASTC. If his diploma read "Alamo Scout", he was a successful course graduate, but returned to his unit. On average, between 20 and 25 Scouts were selected from each class, enough for three complete teams. The teams

selected out of the first five classes conducted operations supporting Sixth Army as it moved up the northern coast of New Guinea.

## The New Guinea Missions

The first Alamo Scout mission was conducted on 27 and 28 February, 1944 by 1LT John R. C. McGowen's team. Alamo Scout teams were generally identified by the team leader's name. McGowen Team was to conduct a pre-invasion reconnaissance of Los Negros Island in the Admiralty Island chain. Transported by Catalina PBY Flying Boat, the team encountered bad weather that delayed the insertion until dawn was breaking. The Scouts identified the Japanese positions and pinpointed their areas of concentration, information that proved invaluable for selecting the bombing targets for the invasion. On the exfiltration, the nervous pilot refused to slow the aircraft sufficiently to allow the team, barely able to clamber aboard the moving PBY, to recover their rubber boat. The mission of McGowan Team validated



*LTG Walter Krueger inspecting trainees at the Alamo Scout Training Center. Corporal Robert Beattie is in the foreground.*



*A Consolidated PBY Catalina Flying Boat was used to insert and extract the McGowen Team on Los Negros Island. Difficulty in launching and recovering the team ended the use of the PBY as a means to insert Alamo Scout teams.*

the Alamo Scout program and led to, among other lessons learned, the abandonment of the "Flying Boat" as a means of delivering teams. Subsequent missions went in by submarine or Navy Patrol Torpedo (PT) boat.<sup>35</sup>

Nearly forty Alamo Scout missions on the mainland of New Guinea and nearby islands were run by seventeen teams from the first five graduating classes of the ASTC.<sup>36</sup> With the exception of the rescue of the civilian detainees at Cape Oransbari, reconnaissance was the primary mission of these teams. LTG Krueger took a close personal interest in the Scout operations. PFC Gil Cox said, "When we were planning for a mission, LTG Krueger often briefed the teams himself."<sup>37</sup> Dove, Nellist, and Rounsaville Teams were combined for one of the final missions in New Guinea, the Cape Oransbari rescue described at the beginning of this article.<sup>38</sup> When the tide of battle shifted from New Guinea to the Philippines, the mission of the Alamo Scouts changed.

Unlike New Guinea and the adjacent off-shore islands, the Philippines had well-developed resistance movements of Filipinos and Americans. Men such as LT Donald Blackburn, LTC Wendell Fertig, and MAJ Russell Volkmann stayed behind following the surrender of the U.S. forces in May 1942. They fled to the interior regions and waged guerrilla warfare against the Japanese Army. When the United States began landing on the different Philippine islands, the guerrillas increased their activity against the Japanese, necessitating the need for communication between the guerrillas and the U.S. Army. While still continuing their reconnaissance missions, the new mission for the Alamo Scouts was to be the liaison between these resistance groups and the Sixth Army.

## The Philippines

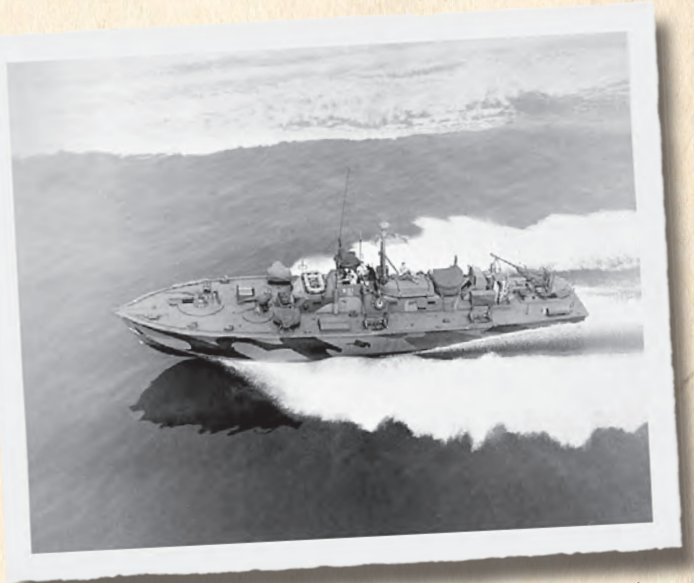
The U.S. strategy for liberating the Philippines involved initial landings on the island of Leyte in October 1944, followed by landings on Mindanao and Samar before finally capturing Luzon and the capitol city of Manila.<sup>39</sup> The capture of Leyte, located in the center of the Philippine Archipelago, allowed the U.S. to build airfields and achieve air superiority over the entire region. On 17 October 1944, the first U.S. forces, the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion, landed on Homonhan and Suluan Islands which guarded the approaches to Leyte Gulf and the island's capitol of Tacloban.<sup>40</sup> Alamo Scout teams were actively involved in the landings, providing reconnaissance of the beaches and intelligence on the enemy disposition.

Following the initial landings, Alamo Scout teams were inserted to reconnoiter future landing beaches. Littlefield Team and McGowen Team were inserted at Palo, on Leyte. Nellist Team landed on Mindanao and Sumner Team on Samar at the same time.<sup>41</sup> These missions were all of two to three days in length. Later liaison missions were of much greater duration.

The team of 1LT Woodrow E. Hobbs was inserted at Cananga on Leyte on 12 November 1944 and remained on the island until 5 December. 1LT Robert



*Alamo Scout Team Leaders following an awards ceremony at Leyte, Philippines in December 1944. L-R, 1LT William Nellist, 1LT Thomas Rounsaville, 1LT Robert Sumner, and 1LT John Dove.*



*The Navy's Patrol Torpedo (PT) boats were the primary vessel used to insert Alamo Scout teams. Swift and maneuverable, the 80-foot craft were ideal for the mission of dropping off and recovering the teams.*

Sumner's team returned from Samar and went into the strategically critical Ormoc Valley on Leyte on 6 November, remaining until withdrawn on 22 December, when major combat operations ceased and the mopping up phase on Leyte began.<sup>42</sup> When the Sixth Army began the invasion of the main island of Luzon, the primary Scout missions were liaison.

The invasion of Luzon commenced on 9 January 1945 in Lingayen Gulf northwest of Manila, and set off the most intense period of Alamo Scout activity. 1LT Robert Sumner was part of the Luzon operations. "We did not put anyone ashore prior to the landings in Luzon. Obviously the G2 [intelligence officer] didn't feel it was necessary; and I think they were absolutely right. The guerrilla forces furnished all of the responses to the



The campaign to retake the Philippines was divided between the Eighth Army and the Sixth Army. Seventeen Alamo Scout teams conducted more than 70 missions in support of the two Armies. In the Philippines, the Scouts added liaison with the guerrilla units to their reconnaissance mission.

EI [essential elements of information],” said Sumner.<sup>43</sup> Instead, the Alamo Scout teams were ferried in Landing Craft Infantry (LCIs) to Lingayen after the initial assault to link up at the Sixth Army forward command post (CP). “We assembled at the Sixth Army jump CP in the morning after the landings. From then on we were fully employed. We were off and running. A couple of the teams worked their way on up into the northern part of Luzon and were up there three and four months at a time,” Sumner said.<sup>44</sup>

William Nellist’s team was sent southeast to the Legaspi-Sorsogon Peninsula on 9 February to establish contact with guerrilla groups in the vicinity and reconnoiter the landing areas for the insertion of the 158<sup>th</sup> Regimental Combat Team (158<sup>th</sup> RCT). CPL Andrew Smith relates that the team was divided up to cover multiple locations. “They split our team up in Tagay and Bulan one time. And they left me in the middle. [SGT Galen] Kittleston, [Staff Sergeant Thomas] Siason, and [1LT William] Nellist went over the mountain to the Pacific side and the rest went out to Bulan. I accused Nellist of leaving me by myself and he said, ‘Well, hell, you were only there for thirty days.’ Thirty days is a long time to not have someone that speaks your language or [provide you with] something to eat.”<sup>45</sup> 1LT Nellist experienced difficulties with rival guerrilla groups and, on order from Sixth Army, took over control of all guerrilla operations on the peninsula.<sup>46</sup> He remained in charge of the guerrillas until 1 April. With the arrival of the 158<sup>th</sup> RCT, Nellist Team turned over the liaison mission to the 158<sup>th</sup> and returned to the Army headquarters. It was the Nellist Team along with the Rounsaville and Dove Teams that took part in the most famous Alamo Scout mission, the rescue of the prisoners from the Cabanatuan Prison Camp.

The two Alamo Scout teams worked with the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion and a Filipino guerrilla force under Captain Eduardo Josen to rescue 513 American and British prisoners from their camp at Cabanatuan, then thirty miles inside Japanese lines.<sup>47</sup> The rapid advance of Sixth Army imperiled the POWs in Japanese hands. The mission was planned and executed on very short notice between 27 January and 1 February 1945. The Rounsaville and Nellist Teams with guerrilla guides negotiated the 30 miles to the vicinity of the POW camp and linked-up with the main Philippine guerrilla unit. The Scouts placed the camp under surveillance on the 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> as the guerrillas moved into blocking positions near the camp. Dove Team accompanied C Company of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion and arrived at the Camp on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Based on the intelligence gathered by the Nellist and Rounsaville teams, LTC Henry Mucci, the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion commander, agreed to wait one day for Japanese units traversing the area to move on before attempting the rescue. On the 30<sup>th</sup>, the forces hit the camp at 7:45 p.m., killing the 200 Japanese guards and rescuing the prisoners. In thirty minutes, the prisoners, escorted by the Rangers, were on their way back to friendly lines,

while the Alamo Scouts provided security to cover the withdrawal.<sup>48</sup> The success of this mission generated such publicity that SGT Harold Hard and SGT Gilbert Cox were sent back to the United States with twelve of the Rangers to meet President Roosevelt and take part in a War Bond drive.<sup>49</sup> The campaign for the capture of Luzon would last until nearly the end of the war and involve the Alamo Scouts in increasingly complex missions.



*6th Rangers move through the grass to take up positions prior to the raid on the Cabanatuan Prison compound. The Nellist and Rounsaville Teams with Filipino guides led the Rangers into position and covered the retreat of the 513 POWs after the successful rescue.*



*Following the successful Cabanatuan Prison Rescue, a select group of Rangers and Alamo Scouts were brought back to the United States to participate in a War Bond drive. Here the men meet with President Franklin Delano Roosevelt in the White House. Alamo Scouts SGT Harold Hard, Rounsaville Team (5th from left) and SGT Gilbert Cox, Nellist Team (far right) were part of the publicity campaign surrounding the successful rescue, March 1945.*



LTG Krueger took Alamo Scout Teams with him from the Philippines to Japan after the surrender in August 1945. Adkins Team performed a reconnaissance of the Wakayama landing beach and Derr Team provided personal security for Krueger.

Until July 1945, when Sixth Army turned over control of operations in Luzon to Eighth Army to begin preparations for the invasion of the Japanese home islands, the Alamo Scouts were continually employed. The teams gathered intelligence on Japanese strengths and locations, set up communications sites and advised and supplied guerrilla units in central and northern Luzon. When not engaged in operations behind the Japanese lines, Alamo Scout teams acted as the personal security detachment for LTG Krueger on his forays away from Sixth Army headquarters.

### On to Japan

General Walter Krueger held the Alamo Scouts in high esteem, and from the inception of the unit, employed a team as his security detachment. The final Alamo Scout mission involved the teams of 1LT George A. Derr, 1LT Henry A. Adkins and 1LT Martin Grimes who had taken over the Shirkey Team. They sailed from Manila with Krueger on 14 September 1945 bound for Japan. About twenty Alamo Scouts were part of the Sixth Army GHQ. The Derr Team accompanied Krueger when he took control of the Sasebo Naval Air Base on 20 September. Later Grimes Team toured Nagasaki with LTG Krueger. SGT Gilbert Cox recalled, "We were just in and out of Nagasaki. The people were still staggering around. It was a mess. Ground Zero was nothing but red dirt, and maybe a chimney standing here or there."<sup>50</sup> When the Sixth Army convoy landed at the port city of Wakayama on 25 September 1945, members of the

### The 6th Ranger Battalion

The 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion was created in December 1943 at the direction of General Douglas A. MacArthur, who saw the need for a Ranger force to replicate the Marine Raider battalions in the Pacific Theater.<sup>1</sup> LTG Walter Krueger, the Sixth Army commander, converted the 98<sup>th</sup> Field Artillery Battalion (75mm Pack Howitzers) into a provisional Ranger Battalion. The mission of the new unit would be for "employment on amphibious raids and diversionary attacks of limited duration."<sup>2</sup> Commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Henry A. Mucci and using volunteers from Sixth Army units, the 6<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalion grew to six rifle companies and a headquarters company. Ironically, it was the decimation of the 1<sup>st</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Ranger Battalions at Cisterna, Italy that provided the TO&E personnel spaces to expand the 6<sup>th</sup> Rangers.<sup>3</sup>

Following a rigorous training program, the Rangers quickly achieved a high level of fitness and proficiency. They proved their mettle by seizing the islands guarding the harbor entrance during the landing at Leyte Gulf in the Philippines. Later, a reinforced C Company under LTC Mucci's direction joined two Alamo Scout Teams and a Filipino guerrilla force to rescue 513 prisoners held at Cabanatuan.

1 David W. Hogan, Jr., *Raiders or Elite Infantry: The Changing Role of the U.S. Army Rangers from Dieppe to Grenada* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1992), 83.  
 2 Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry*, 83-84.  
 3 Hogan, *Raiders or Elite Infantry*, 85.

Adkins and Grimes teams performed an advanced reconnaissance. This proved unnecessary as the Japanese had evacuated the city.<sup>51</sup>

LTG Krueger and the Sixth Army were scheduled to establish their headquarters in the ancient Japanese capital city of Kyoto. A select group of Alamo Scouts accompanied Krueger as his Honor Guard when he arrived on 28 September. From this point forward, the Scouts were detailed to the 6th Ranger Battalion for administration but had no real duties. As time passed, the men gradually rotated back to the United States. The Alamo Scout Training Center, then located on Luzon at Subic Bay, closed on 10 October 1945. The Alamo Scout teams were never officially disbanded, but simply melted away with the drawdown of American forces.

The Alamo Scouts were established to meet the specific needs of Sixth Army. Their missions grew from straight-forward reconnaissance to increasingly sophisticated operations supporting the Philippine guerrillas and establishing intelligence networks. The product of a stringent selection process and an exceptional training program, the Alamo Scouts are part of the legacy of Army Special Operations Forces. In March 1988, they were awarded the Special Forces Tab in recognition of their role as one of the predecessors of Army Special Forces. ♣

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## Endnotes

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- 2 Louis Morton, *The U.S. Army in World War II. The War in the Pacific: Strategy and Command, The First Two Years* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1962); John C. Boleyn, "The Japanese Expansion in the Pacific, 7 December 1941-12 September 1942," Advanced Infantry Officer Course, 1948-1949, Fort Benning, Georgia, monograph in the Donovan Research Library Digitized Monograph Collection, <https://www.infantry.army.mil/monographs/content/wvii/STUP2/Boleyn.%20John%20C.%20ILT.pdf>.
- 3 Samuel Milner, *The U.S. Army in World War II. The War in the Pacific: Victory in Papua* (Washington DC: Office of the Chief of Military History, 1971), 49.
- 4 Morton, *The War in the Pacific*, 407-408.



*U.S. troops landing at Wakayama, Japan, 25 September 1945. The Alamo Scout Adkins and Grimes Teams conducted advance reconnaissance of the landing beaches. Derr Team accompanied LTG Krueger from the Philippines and served as his personal security team when Krueger took control of the city.*

- 5 General Headquarters, Southwest Pacific Area, *The Reports of General MacArthur: The Campaigns of MacArthur in the Pacific*, Vol I (Washington DC: Center of Military History Publication 13-3, reprint 1994), 107-109.
- 6 Morton, *The War in the Pacific*, 408.
- 7 Walter Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon: The Story of Sixth Army in World War II*, (Washington DC, Combat Forces Press, 1953) 10.
- 8 Morton, *The War in the Pacific*, 407; GHQ SWPA, *The Reports of General MacArthur*, 183.
- 9 GHQ, SWPA: *The Reports of General MacArthur*, 67.
- 10 GHQ, SWPA: *The Reports of General MacArthur*, 117.
- 11 Kermit Roosevelt, *War Reports of the OSS: The Overseas Targets Vol II* (New York: Walker and Company, 1976), 358.
- 12 GHQ, SWPA: *The Reports of General MacArthur*, 54. For a more complete story of the Allied Intelligence Bureau, see William B. Breuer, *MacArthur's Undercover War: Spies, Saboteurs, Guerrillas, and Secret Missions* (Edison, NJ, Castle Books, 2005) and Allison Ind, *Allied Intelligence Bureau: Our Secret Weapon in the War Against Japan* (New York: David McKay Co) 1958.
- 13 The Japanese evacuated the island of Kiska undetected by the Allies in July 1943. Three weeks later, the Allies landed a major invasion force on the island. The enemy executed a similar evacuation from Guadalcanal. Kenneth Finlayson, "Operation Cottage: The First Special Service Force in the Kiska Campaign," *Veritas*, Vol 4, No. 2, 2008.
- 14 Krueger, *From Down Under to Nippon*, 29.
- 15 Lance Q. Zedric, *Silent Warriors: The Alamo Scouts Behind Japanese Lines* (Ventura, CA: Pathfinder Publishing Co., 1995), 45-50.
- 16 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 52.
- 17 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 54.
- 18 Colonel Robert Sumner, Alamo Scouts, interview by Dr. John W. Partin and Dr. Richard Stewart, 10 December 1991, Tampa FL, transcript, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 19 Command Sergeant Major Galen C. Kittleson, Alamo Scouts, interview by Dr. Richard Stewart and Dr. Stanley Sandler, 10 October 1993, Fort Bragg, NC, transcript, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 20 Staff Sergeant Zeke McConnell, Alamo Scouts, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 7 April 2006, Seattle, WA, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 21 Sumner interview.
- 22 Command Sergeant Major Galen C. Kittleson, Alamo Scouts, interview by Ms Cynthia Hayden, 10 March 2000, Fort Bragg, NC, transcript, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 23 Corporal Andrew E. Smith, Alamo Scouts, interview by Dr. Richard Stewart and Dr. Stanley Sandler, 10 October 1993, Fort Bragg, NC, transcript, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.



- 24 Sumner interview.
- 25 First Lieutenant Thomas J. Rounsaville, Alamo Scouts, interview by Dr. Stanley Sandler, 1 October 1993, Fort Bragg, NC, transcript, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 26 Sumner interview.
- 27 Smith interview.
- 28 Sumner interview.
- 29 Sumner interview.
- 30 Rounsaville interview.
- 31 Sergeant First Class Gilbert J. Cox, Alamo Scouts, interview by Dr. Charles H. Briscoe, 14 December 2005, Des Moines, WA, digital recording, USASOC History Office Classified Files, Fort Bragg, NC.
- 32 Smith interview.
- 33 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 86-87.
- 34 Sumner interview.
- 35 Niles, "The Operations of the Alamo Scouts", 5.
- 36 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 276-279.
- 37 Cox interview.
- 38 Cox interview.
- 39 M. Hamlin Cannon, *The U.S. Army in World War II, Leyte: The Return to the Philippines* (Washington DC, Office of the Chief of Military History, 1954), 21-39.
- 40 Cannon, 54-57. **The 6th Ranger Battalion was another special operations unit created by LTC Krueger. The battalion was not affiliated with the Ranger battalions created by COL William O. Darby that fought in the European Theater. Lieutenant Colonel Henry Mucci, the battalion commander, led C Company of the 6th Ranger Battalion, the main element in the Cabanatuan Prison Camp liberation in February 1945. Two Alamo Scout teams, Nellist and Rounsaville, acted as the advanced reconnaissance and guides on this operation.**
- 41 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 276-279.
- 42 Sumner interview; Cannon, 329-346.
- 43 Sumner interview.
- 44 Sumner interview.
- 45 Smith interview.
- 46 Niles, "The Operations of the Alamo Scouts", 20.
- 47 **The Cabanatuan rescue mission is one of the most famous POW rescues in history. SGT Galen Kittleson of Nellist Team had the distinction of being on both the Oransbari and Cabanatuan rescue missions in World War II as well as the Son Tay POW rescue attempt in the Vietnam War. The Cabanatuan rescue is well documented. See Hampton Sides, *Ghost Soldiers: The Forgotten Epic Story of World War II's Most Dramatic Mission*, (New York; Doubleday, 2001); Zedric, 187-198; Forest Bryant Johnson, *Hour of Redemption: The Heroic WW II Saga of Americas Most Daring POW Rescue* (New York: Warner Books, Inc. 1978); Charles W. Sasser, *Raider* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2002).**
- 48 Sides, *Ghost Soldiers: The Forgotten Epic Story of World War II's Most Dramatic Mission*, 309-312.
- 49 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 199-200.
- 50 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 245.
- 51 Zedric, *Silent Warriors*, 246.

