

CHAPTER 9

18-23 AUGUST: SHOCK TROOPS! JAPAN MOVES TO RETAKE GUADALCANAL

Following the American invasion of Guadalcanal, the IJN was able to land two small detachments of naval troops back on the island by destroyer during the nights of 16 and 17 August (one of the destroyers involved was the *Oite*). The first detachment consisted of 197 5th Sasebo SNLF marines, the survivors from a larger group which had been aboard the torpedoed *Meiyo Maru* (see Chapter 6). The second detachment was 113 men of the 5th Yokosuka SNLF which included communications specialists and a radio transmitter.

These minor reinforcements were executed by the Eighth Fleet from Rabaul, also bolstering communications with the existing forces on Guadalcanal. However, the need to retake the island exercised many minds in the Imperial General Headquarters in Tokyo. The IJA had recently formed the 17th Army for operations in New Guinea and the South Pacific, and its uncommitted troops scattered in the Philippines, at Palau and Saipan were assigned to the new operation. The troops from Saipan were already *en route* to Truk and hence would be the first IJA troops sent to the Solomons. They were about 2,000 men of the 28th Infantry Regiment, under the command of Colonel Ichiki Kiyonao. In addition, the IJN committed 500 marines of the 5th Yokosuka SNLF which were currently at Truk.

These forces were arranged in three echelons, as detailed below. The first echelon consisted of 917 men of the 28th Infantry Regiment, commanded by Colonel Ichiki himself, and was henceforth known as the Ichiki Detachment. The first two echelons departed Truk on 16 August, while the third departed the following day before catching up and joining with the second echelon. Rear Admiral Tanaka Raizo, aboard the light cruiser *Jintsu*, was in command of the second and third echelons.

Japanese Guadalcanal Convoys departing Truk 16 & 17 August 1942

First Echelon

Ichiki Detachment: 917 troops of the IJA
28th Infantry Regiment
Destroyers: *Arashi*, *Hagikaze*, *Kagero*,
Hamakaze, *Tanikaze*, *Urukaze*

Second Echelon

1,100 troops of the IJA 28th Infantry Regiment
IJA transports: *Boston Maru*, *Daifuku Maru*
Patrol Boats: *PB-34*, *PB-35*
Light cruiser: *Jintsu* (Rear Admiral
Tanaka Raizo)

Third Echelon

500 marines of the 5th Yokosuka SNLF
Armed Merchant Cruiser: *Kinryu Maru*
Patrol Boats: *PB-1*, *PB-2*
Destroyers: *Kawakaze*, *Suzukaze*, *Umikaze*
(joined convoy on 18 August)