

Plenty waded—neck-deep, chest-deep, knee-deep. There weren't enough of the shallow-draft boats, and those available couldn't afford to take chances. The best they could do was bring men in for a shorter wade.

And in these things were hell. An innocent looking wreck out in the lagoon was pouring in a murderous back fire. From under the long wharf machine-gun nests were raking the water. In front the Jap. pill-boxes were putting out a hail of lead. The Marines were being slaughtered. The destroyers promptly turned their guns on the wreck and silenced it. And the Marines came on. Within a little over an hour six waves had established themselves on the beach. But only just. The three beach-heads were only 125 ft. to 150 ft. deep, and at one the Marines were pinned for a time between the water's edge and a log wall 20 ft. inland.

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The Jap. pill-boxes and blockhouses were hard nuts to crack and were still pouring out deadly fire at nightfall. Things weren't so good. There was little sleep that night, and those on guard, two out of every three, had orders to fire at everything that moved.

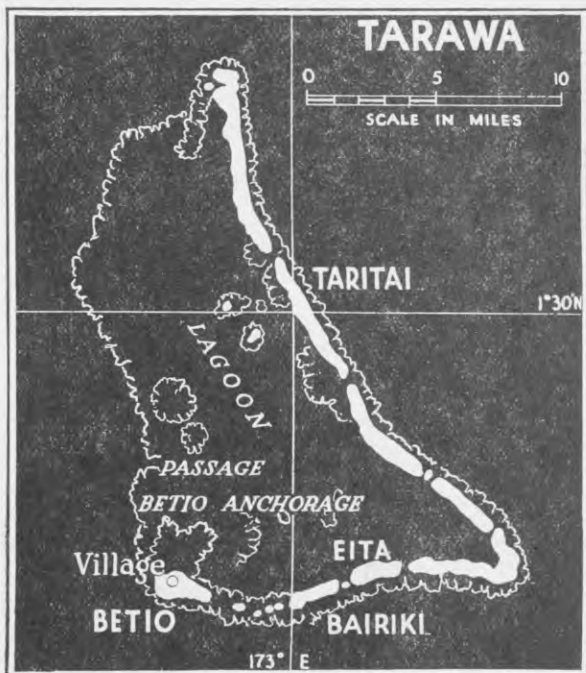
Next morning, as reserves came in, it was found that under the cover of night the Japs. had stolen out and re-established themselves on the wreck, taking American machine guns and ammunition from stranded boats. Once again they raked the incoming boats until the destroyers put them out of action.

Afternoon saw an improvement in the situation. Some tanks and 75 mm. guns were ashore and were knocking out the blockhouses at point-blank range, while infantry slipped bangalore torpedoes through the slits. The incessant bombardment was having its effect and accurate

and concentrated dive-bombing by carrier planes was cracking up the fortifications. The co-operation of the dive-bombers was amazingly accurate. At times they were working only 200 yards ahead of the attacking troops.

The blockhouses—built by the Japs. were almost impregnable. A concrete emplacement 5 ft. thick was covered with 18 in. diameter palm logs. Outside the logs were angle irons of railway rails, and over all was 10 ft. to 12 ft. of sand and coral. The Commanding Officer describing them said: "Nothing but a direct hit from a 2,000 lb. bomb would cave in or destroy that blockhouse. A number of them stood up like a house in the sky, silhouetted, and practically every one was hit by a projectile."

Other pill-boxes were protected by two rows of palm logs 6 ft. apart with the



Tarawa consists of a chain of principal islands and a number of smaller ones.