



Training for War: 27th ID Prepares for Combat, 1943

After the 27th ID reached 21,719 soldiers, fifteen men short of its full strength, in early 1942, the unit began intense combat training, including strenuous hikes, firearm drills, and numerous amphibious landing and jungle training exercises. Ready for battle after years of training at Fort McClellan, California, and Hawaii, the 27th Infantry Division experienced its first combat in the attack and capture of Makin Atoll on November 20, 1943. Soon thereafter, the 27th engaged and defeated the Japanese at the Majuro Atoll on February 1, 1944, and Eniwetok Atoll on February 19, 1944.



Soldiers of the 165th Infantry Regiment slowly assault Butaritari, Makin Atoll, November 1943. Crossing over the sharp and jagged coral, dodging Japanese machine gun fire and avoiding two nearby wrecked ships made it difficult for the 165th to get to shore quickly.
New York State Military Museum

important strongholds from which Americans could launch aerial bombardments and naval attacks further into Japanese held territories. During more than one year of intense combat in the Pacific, the well-trained soldiers of the 27th ID suffered 1,152 killed in action; 4,980 wounded personnel, and 332 who later succumbed to their wounds.



Private John H. Bender, 27th ID, fires a bazooka into a cave during cleanup operations against Japanese stragglers still sniping and harassing Americans on Saipan, July 28, 1944.
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Members of an unidentified 27th ID artillery regiment fire a towed, M1, 155mm gun at Japanese forces entrenched on Tinian Island, six miles from the 27th ID Saipan position, July 24, 1944. New York State Military Museum

The 27th would continue on to participate in some of the most brutal battles of the Pacific Theater including surviving and repelling a vicious Japanese banzai attack during the Battle of Saipan from June 16 to July 7, 1944, and the difficult and long Battle of Okinawa from April 9 to August 8, 1945. However, these early battles in the Gilbert and Marshall Islands Campaign successfully penetrated the outer limits of the Japanese Empire's defenses, gaining



A 27th ID soldier atop a Japanese tank following the Battle of Makin, November 20-23, 1943. The fight for the island of Makin was the first time the soldiers of the 27th ID went into battle against the Japanese Army. New York State Military Museum