

CN BOUGAINVILLE.

ENEMY RESISTANCE.

Savage Patrol Action.

(From Our Special Correspondent.)

BOUGAINVILLE, Jan 28.—Australian troops driving deep into Japanese positions in the north towards Buka Passage are meeting strong resistance. The Japanese are well equipped and in good condition and there is every indication of organised leadership and aggressive tactics.

In the centre, along the Numa-Numa trail eastwards, the Australians are consolidated on Pearl Ridge, 800 yards from the strongly fortified Japanese-held ridge on Smith's Hill. Constant patrolling is being carried out but neither side has staged a major assault.

In the southern sector the Australian advance has reached the Motupena Peninsula, the southern extremity of Empress Augusta Bay. Here the Australian positions have been strengthened and supply lines consolidated. Strong fighting patrols are moving out daily in all directions, destroying Japanese positions and disrupting lines of communication.

To the north, a spearhead has been established at Taimba, more than 40 miles north-west of Torokina along the coast. Patrols are fanning out from this locality and meeting strong Japanese resistance.

South of Sarime patrols are exploring territory inland and testing the Japanese defences. One of the most savage patrol actions of the campaign occurred in this sector. The Australians killed at least 14 Japanese and wounded five. Lieut Alec Roodakoff, of Tully (North Queensland) was the patrol leader. The patrol consisted of 38 Australians, 12 ANGAIU police boys and 50 native porters. The party set out to "reccé" in the area of Munamatoro. For five days the men forged through the jungle and over steep coastal ridges. For two days they followed recently made Japanese tracks. Nearing a village forward scouts saw no movement, although natives had reported the Japanese in occupation.

Japanese Alert.

Lieut Roodakoff sent one section forward along a track to head off Japanese driven from the village. Two sections approached three huts in a clearing, leaving signallers and stretcher bearers some distance in

in a clearing, leaving signallers and stretcher bearers some distance in the rear to guard equipment. The Japanese had observed the approach and opened fire. L/Sgt Davies-Griffiths silenced the fire, killing two Japanese.

Nearby, a huge spreading tree concealed a Japanese machine-gun post and two snipers. Two light machine-guns were also brought to bear on the advancing Australians. Meanwhile, more Japanese were pouring in to reinforce their comrades. Australians killed many of these and wounded others who ran away screaming. In one encounter two groups of seven or eight Japanese charged an Owen-gunner. He fired bursts into them and they fled. Native scouts also killed three and wounded two.

Meanwhile L/Sgt Davies-Griffiths countered a Japanese encircling movement. The patrol withdrew to platoon headquarters which had been established back along the track. Dodging from cover to cover, a native police boy reached a wounded Australian, hoisted him on his shoulder and regained the main body.

Meanwhile, the Japanese had attacked the rear headquarters and the signallers and other men were putting up a good fight. Two Japanese were killed and one wounded. The engagement continued, in all, for more than two hours before the Japanese were driven off.

In the exhausting trek to the nearest Australian base the wounded were carried on stretchers by native boys.