

S. F. Has '1-Man Army' In Buna

Sgt. Bottcher's Platoon
Holds Area Between
Two Jap Forces

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WITH AMERICAN GROUND FORCES IN PAPUA, Dec. 11 (INS).—The hottest spot on this battlefield is being held by a single platoon under Staff Sergeant Herman Bottcher, and he probably is making the Japanese think he is America's secret weapon.

To his fellow-soldiers fighting for Buna, this San Francisco soldier has become an almost legendary figure, and is being labeled as New Guinea's "One Man Army."

The spot Bottcher and his men occupy is a small strip of beach with the Japs entrenched in Buna village, 100 yards to the west, and in Buna mission, 500 yards to the east.

The American beachhead was gained last Saturday when Bottcher and his men stormed the position in the face of heavy machine gun fire. Since then, he and his men have held the position against repeated enemy attacks.

They have killed at least sixty Japanese and captured two enemy machine guns. Bottcher immediately turned the guns against the Japanese.

WAS IN SPAIN

Bottcher, fair and raw-boned with a flowing black beard, is beating the Japanese at their own game as he fights guerrilla warfare. He went to Spain as a professional soldier and became a captain in the Loyalist Army. He is not overawed by military procedure or the sight of a general's star.

It was on Monday that the Japanese began simultaneous attacks from the village and mission in an effort to wipe out this lone "menace."

TOOK THEM ON

One Japanese attacking force got under way before the other, and Bottcher broke up the force coming along the beach from the mission. At least fifteen Japs were killed. Then he turned his guns on the attacks coming along the beach from the opposite direction. The Japanese were annihilated.

Last night Bottcher repeated the dose when the enemy launched another "co-ordinated" attack from the front and rear of Bottcher's positions. They threw mortar shells at him for half an hour and then started along the beach.

But again their plan misfired. Bottcher detected one force by the light of flares and opened up on them. The Japanese fled leaving the beach littered with their dead. They also left two machine guns, which were brought in by Bottcher and one of his men.

The guns were functioning when the Japanese attack from the village started.

The tough sergeant has been wounded twice. One was a hand wound and yesterday he was wounded in the arm. Typical of this hard-fighting man is the way he treats the wounds. He ignores them.