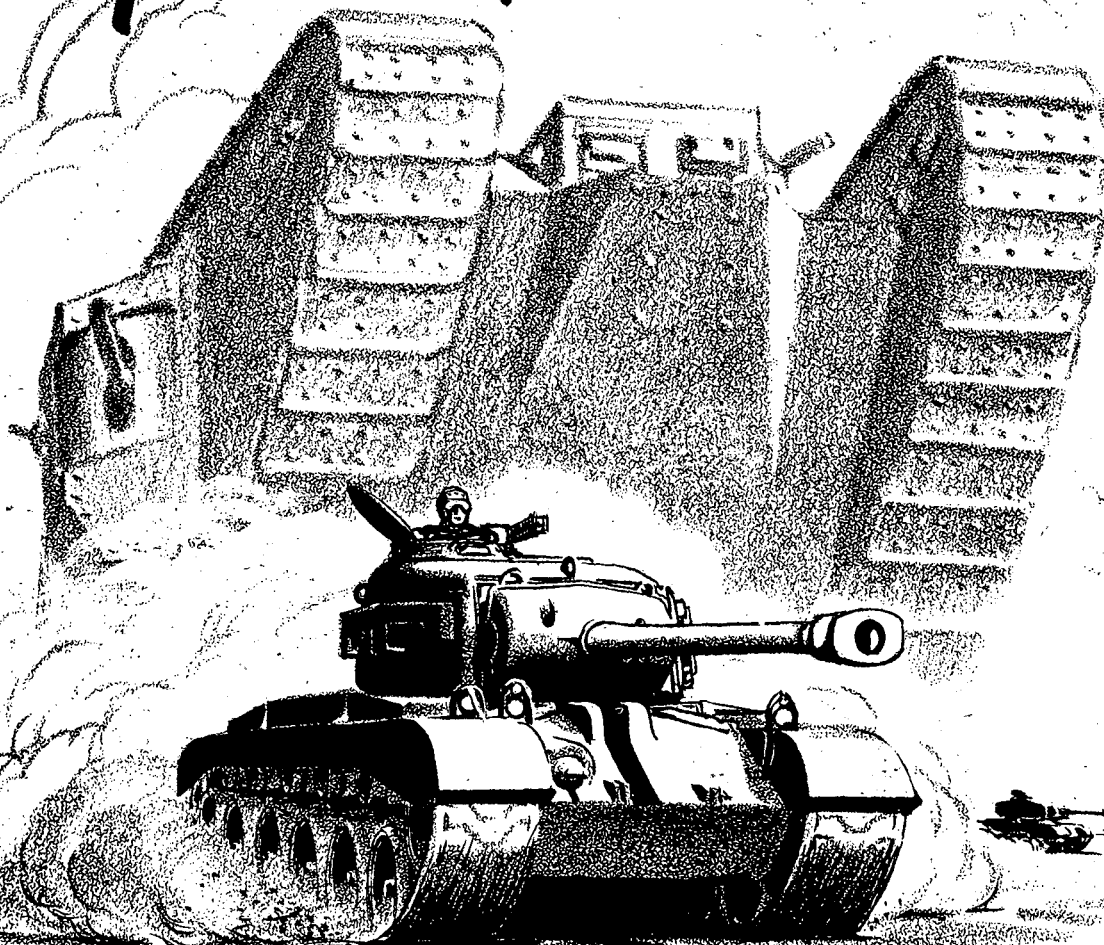


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# Armor in the Night Attack

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**A RESEARCH REPORT**

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1949 - 1950

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ARMOR IN THE NIGHT ATTACK

A RESEARCH REPORT PREPARED

BY

COMMITTEE 21, OFFICERS ADVANCED COURSE

THE ARMORED SCHOOL

1949-1950

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FORT KNOX, KENTUCKY

June 1950

## PREFACE

We, the authors, in our extensive search for source materials on the employment of armor in night attacks, have been constantly impressed by the lack of detailed and accurate references. The documentation of night operations by the majority of unit after-action-reports and histories is limited to extremely vague and uncertain accounts of the units' tactical employment during the hours of darkness.

We have, by personal interview and correspondence with individuals known to have participated in these actions, endeavored to tie together existing material. We feel that the type actions we have selected contain sufficient material to be of value to the reader.

We desire to extend our thanks to both the Research and Reproduction facilities of The Armored School and to interviewed former members of the units cited herein whose helpful cooperation made this report possible.

Committee 21

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION

Throughout the history of war, references are made to military actions conducted at night. Even in studying the tactics of the American Indian and the more prominent Indian Scouts during the early history of this country, one is continuously impressed by the value of darkness both as a cover for offensive action and a protection for the defender or escapee. However, it was not until World War II that the value of night attacks by combined arms teams of tanks and infantry, supported by artillery, were extensively recognized.

It is difficult to conceive a military operation, either offensive or defensive, that does not benefit from the ability of the commander to achieve secrecy and surprise. It is logical to assume that the degree of success attained will be directly proportionate to the amount of secrecy and surprise which can be developed. The advantages of night operations as a means for securing these vital elements is currently recognized and accepted by military authorities.

It is seldom that a tactical maneuver, conducted offensively, will embody all of the desirable characteristics presently constituted in the nine principles of war. On the other hand, it is seldom that a night operation, properly planned and executed, will not attain the advantages of at least eight of

these principles. In some instances, it is an accepted fact that the principle of maneuver must be relegated to a role of minor importance due to lack of visibility. However, even this disadvantage can be overcome with the aid of bright moonlight or by the use of artificial lighting in the battlefield area.

In any discussion of night operations, consideration must also be given to the psychological effect obtainable. It is universally recognized that man, by nature, is fearful of the unknown and it is easily recognizable that the capabilities of a soldier will be extremely limited and unreliable when defending against an attack of unknown strength and composition which he can hear but cannot see. On the other hand, most of the psychological disadvantage of fear is removed from the side of the attacker by virtue of his knowledge as to when, where, and how the attack is to be conducted.

During World War II many instances have been recorded where units, both armored and infantry, were engaged in operations at night. The majority of these actions, however, were not of the preplanned type but were restricted to the more common type of meeting engagement or the continuation of an attack after dark in order to fully exploit advantages gained during daylight.

In this report a variety of armored night operations are being presented in order to depict the flexibility possible in the employment of armor at night. The report includes, in order of presentation, an action by the 30th Infantry Division with

two tank battalions attached, a night attack by CCA and CCB of the 10th Armored Division, a night attack by elements of the 4th Armored Division, and a detailed account of a night attack by the 51st British Infantry Division with "W" Armored Brigade attached.



## CHAPTER 2

### 30th INFANTRY DIVISION

An example of what has been accomplished in night attacks is demonstrated by actions of the 30th United States Infantry Division and two attached units, the 743d Tank Battalion and the 823d Tank Destroyer Battalion, during the nights of 25-26 and 26-27 February 1945. The operation is an example of a regimental size unit making a night attack which was preceded by detailed planning.

This division had been advancing rapidly by means of conventional daylight attacks and by 251600 February had occupied <sup>1</sup> RODINGEN, HALLEN, and STEINSTRASS. (fig 1)

Intelligence indicated that the Germans had reinforced on the preceding night by the movement of the 9th and 11th Panzer Divisions into positions along the ROER RIVER. Captured elements of these units disclosed that the new troops were not thoroughly oriented into the situation. <sup>2</sup>

The area immediately forward of the 30th Division consisted of flat and open terrain affording little cover and concealment for the conventional daylight attack. <sup>3</sup>

For the above reasons the Division Commander decided to execute a series of night attacks to secure objectives which might otherwise have been costly to attain. In addition, constant pressure would keep the enemy off balance.

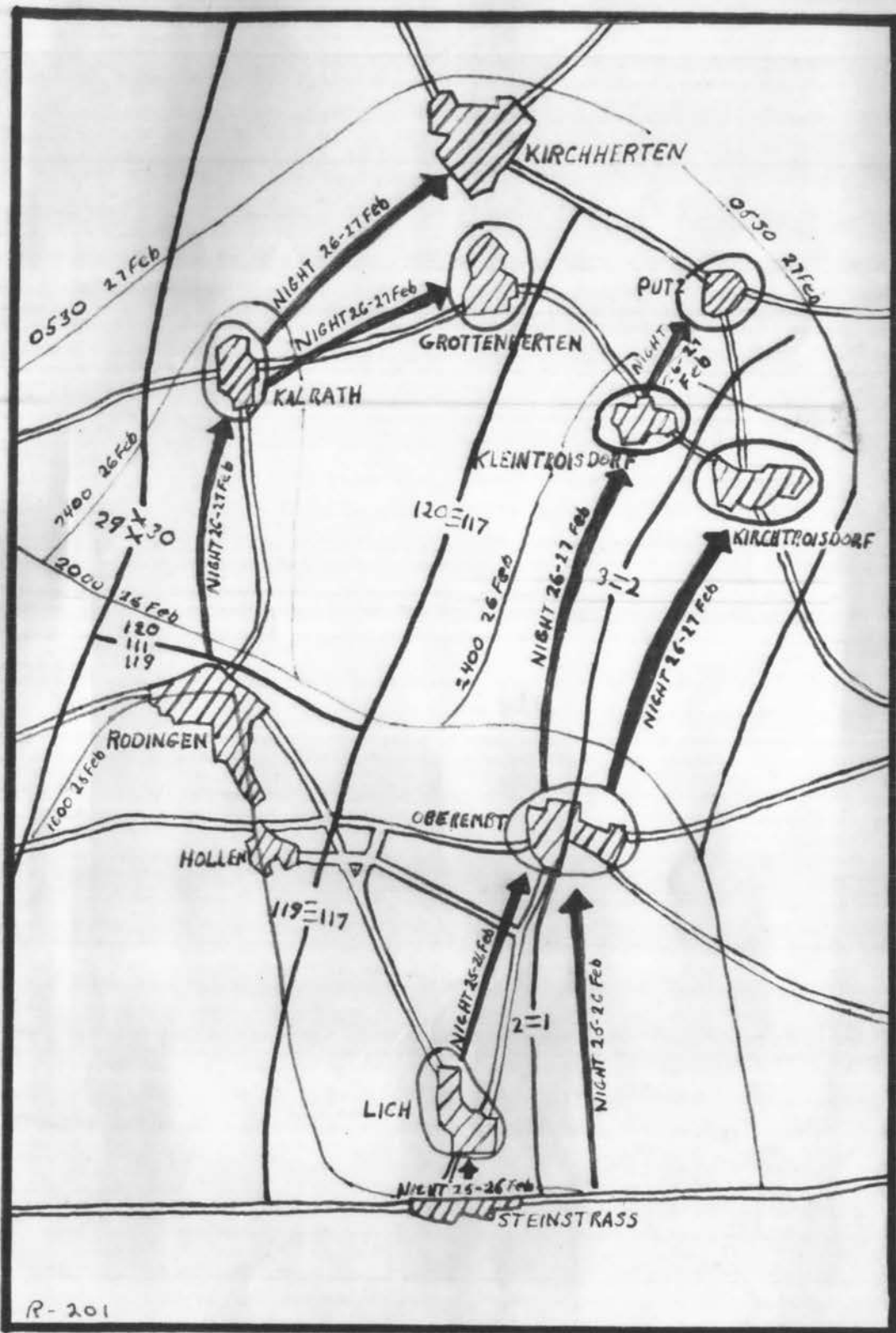
### Division General Plan

The division general plan called for the 117th Infantry Regiment to attack on the night of 25-26 February to seize the villages of LICH and OBEREMBT, thus strengthening the division line in the area. (fig 1) The following night the 120th Infantry Regiment was to pass through the 119th Infantry Regiment in the vicinity of RODINGEN and to attack abreast of the 117th to seize HALRATH, GROTTHERTEN, and REICHERTEN. On the same night the 117th was to seize KLEINTROISDORF, KIRCHTROISDORF, and PUTZ.<sup>4</sup> Our discussion will deal in detail only with the actions of the 117th Infantry Regiment.

#### Attack on Village of LICH

H-hour for the attack on LICH was set for 252145 February. At this time one company, 2d Battalion 117th Infantry Regiment, mounted on the tanks of Company A, 743d Tank Battalion, advanced rapidly north out of STEINSTRASS. This assault echelon was followed by a support company of infantry on foot. The remainder of the battalion furnished fire support from positions in the vicinity of STEINSTRASS. Division Artillery placed a heavy concentration on the objective at H-hour.<sup>5</sup>

The mounted elements advanced at the rate of five miles per hour to an assault position within 100 yards of the village. At this point the infantry dismounted and under cover of the tank fire assaulted the objective. LICH was cleared by midnight and preplanned defenses were organized.



R-201

Fig 1

One enemy tank was destroyed, several antitank guns were overrun, and 94 prisoners were taken in this operation. <sup>6</sup>

#### Attack on OBEREMBT

Following the capture of LICH the 117th Infantry Regiment prepared to continue the attack on OBEREMBT. H-hour was set for 260400 February, which allowed three hours of darkness for the operation. <sup>7</sup> (fig 2)

#### Plan

The regiment planned to attack with the 1st and 2d Battalions abreast with the 1st Battalion on the right. The line of departure for the 2d Battalion was to be the forward edge of their positions in LICH. The line of departure for the 1st Battalion was to be the road running east out of STEINSTRASS. <sup>8</sup>

#### Artillery Support

The artillery plan called for the division artillery to fire a TOT mission on OBEREMBT at 0400 hours. They were subsequently to mark the objective with white phosphorus. During the actual assault phase, a heavy concentration of all fires was to be placed on the objective and to be lifted on call from the assault units. A box barrage was planned to isolate the objective in the event of an enemy counterattack. <sup>9</sup>

#### Control

The direction of the attack was to be controlled by tank columns guiding on buildings set on fire by the artillery and on specified roads leading north from the line of departure.

Foot elements were to follow the tank tracks which were easily discernible in the soft ground and to maintain direction by guiding on the burning buildings.

10

Command liaison was to be accomplished by having the infantry assault commanders ride with the tank platoon leaders.

Communications was to be maintained by the use of the tank-infantry radio net. Through this net the tank and infantry company commanders could contact all their subordinates.

11

#### Reorganization and Movement to Line of Departure

During the reorganization of the 2d Battalion in LICH between 2400 and 0400 covering fires were furnished by the mortars of the infantry, by the supporting tanks, and by the 118th Field Artillery Battalion which was in direct support.

It was necessary for the 1st Battalion to move from its assembly area in STEINSTRASS to an attack position 3,000 yards to the east. This movement commenced at 0200 as scheduled but was quickly halted by unexpected fire from an enemy tank and personnel carriers from a position farther to the east. (fig 2) This fire scattered the leading elements and necessitated reorganization. The resistance was overcome by fire from our tanks and tank destroyers only after considerable delay and loss of the desired surprise. Two platoons of infantry and one platoon of tanks were assigned the mission of organizing and holding a road block on the right flank of the line of departure (fig 2) to secure the attack from further harassment from that

12  
direction.

The necessity of fighting for the line of departure delayed the attack for one hour.

#### Conduct of the Attack

The battalions jumped off in the attack at 0500, each operating with two infantry companies abreast mounted on the vehicles of the attached tank companies and tank destroyer platoons. This assault echelon was followed by the remaining infantry company and support elements on foot.

Guiding on the burning buildings and white phosphorus smoke which effectively outlined the objective, the 1st Battalion proceeded over the flat terrain with little or no resistance other than an occasional enemy round fired at them. The 2d Battalion encountered an enemy position north of LICH which it quickly overcame and the advance proceeded.

As the leading vehicles reached a line about 1,500 yards from the forward edge of OBEREMBT, they opened fire with automatic weapons to cover their further advance. When the assault wave came within 500 yards of the objective the preplanned artillery concentrations were called for. The infantry dismounted from the tanks about a hundred yards from the town and closed in the assault, closely supported by the tanks. As the actual assault got under way the expected enemy artillery fires did not materialize. The only resistance came from isolated groups firing from courtyards and houses. Two enemy tanks had

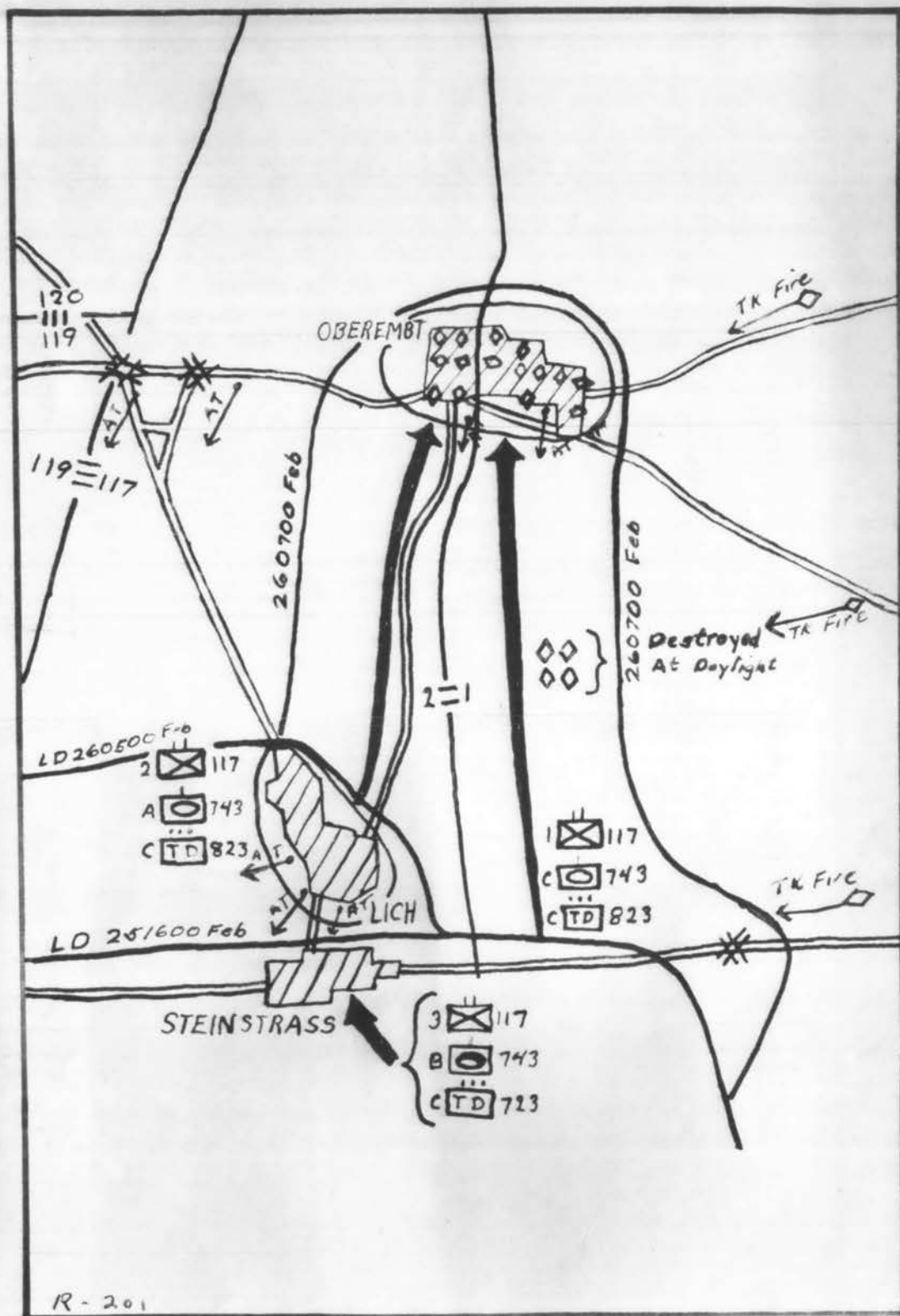




Fig 2

been abandoned so quickly that their motors were still running  
13  
when captured.

Four tanks were lost as a result of this action. However, it is worthwhile to note that these losses resulted from their being exposed to enemy fire at daylight and not from enemy fire during the hours of darkness. Two tanks attached to the 1st Battalion fell into bomb craters during the advance. A tank recovery vehicle and one other tank remained behind to retrieve them and had just succeeded in removing the second tank from the hole at dawn when they were taken under fire from the exposed right flank. All four vehicles were destroyed. Had this attack got under way at 0400 as planned an additional hour of darkness might have made it possible to avoid these losses. 14

In OBEREMBT the attacking forces completely surprised elements of the 11th Panzer Grenadier Regiment and the 301st GHQ Tank Battalion. An untold number of enemy were killed, 168 prisoners were taken, and two tanks and many anti-tank guns were captured or destroyed.

Attack on KIRCHTROISDORF, KLEINTROISDORF and PUTZ

The 117th Regiment planned to continue the attack the following night, February 26-27, to capture the three villages of KIRCHTROISDORF, KLEINTROISDORF, and PUTZ. The daylight hours following the capture of OBEREMBT were devoted to detailed planning and reconnaissance. Additional support was furnished the regiment for this operation by the attachment of a company of

British flail tanks to be used for breaching mine fields.

Workable plans for artillery support, control and communications had been developed during the attacks of the two preceding nights and it was decided that these same methods would be employed again.

The completed Regimental plan as issued at 261800 February called for the 3d Battalion now located in STEINSTRASS (fig 3) to move up on the right of the 2d Battalion and attack in the left portion of the Regimental zone to seize KLEINTROISDORF. Simultaneously the 2d Battalion was to attack on the right and seize KIRCHTROISDORF. Following the seizure of these objectives the 1st Battalion was to be committed through the 3d Battalion to take the village of PUTZ.

15

These maneuvers although simple in plan gave rise to many problems which if not solved could have seriously impaired the operation.

One of these problems was presented by the necessity of moving the 3d Battalion plus the attached tank company to an attack position just in rear of the line of departure. This move involved a distance of some 3,000 yards and passage through other elements of the regiment in order to get into position, all of which had to be accomplished under cover of darkness. In order to minimize this problem, each officer of the assault echelon made a personal route reconnaissance to the line of departure and all officers and key noncommissioned officers made map and

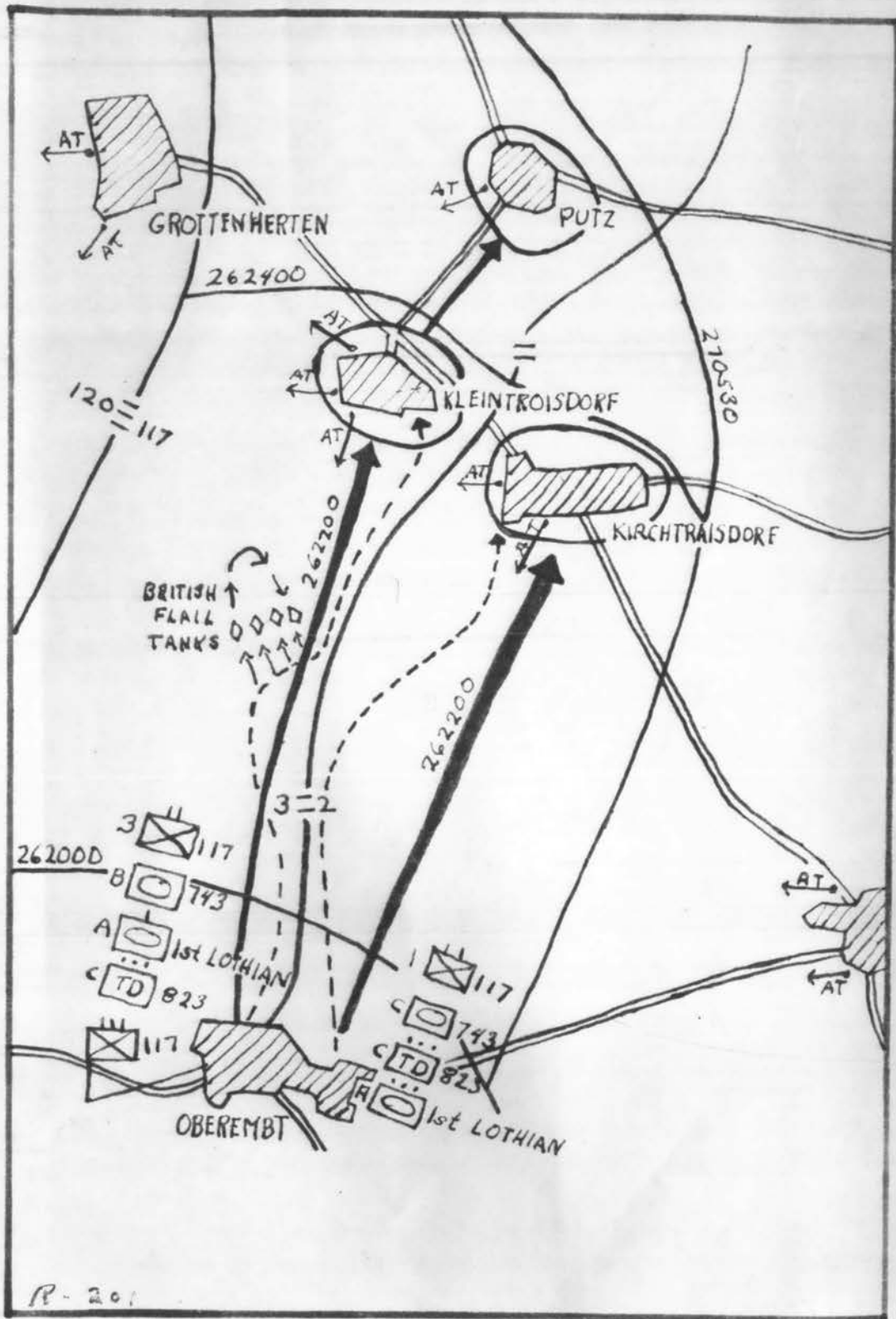


Fig 3

aerial photo reconnaissance of the area in an effort to memorize the details of the terrain.

This movement gave rise to a second problem during the period that the 3d Battalion was actually passing through OBEREMBT for at this time the entire regiment would be concentrated in the village and vulnerable to artillery fire. Likewise the movement of reserves from STEINSTRASS left the regiment with its lines of communications unprotected and very vulnerable to enemy counterattacks should they be directed at LICH or STEINSTRASS. The 30th Division furnished the solution to this problem by moving an attached combat command of the 2d Armored Division into STEINSTRASS to secure the Divisions' right flank. As the 1st Battalion moved out of OBEREMBT for the attack through PUTZ, this combat command moved forward to occupy OBEREMBT and to secure the rear of the 117th Regiment.

16

The artillery threat in OBEREMBT was reduced by intensive counter-battery fire during the actual move.

The problem of conducting a coordinated night attack by two battalions against objectives which were approximately 300 yards apart was solved by very close control and excellent communications.

The attack was executed as planned and the objectives successfully occupied prior to daylight.

One incident occurred during the course of this action which serves to demonstrate the need for detailed coordination

in such a night operation. A platoon of flail tanks which were to follow the 1st Battalion lost contact and turned left into the 3d Battalion zone. After proceeding a few hundred yards the platoon leader realized his mistake and turned to retrace his route. As the platoon again approached the axis of advance it was observed by elements of the 3d Battalion, which had crossed the line of departure 10 minutes late. The leading elements of the 3d Battalion took the flail tanks under fire with the presumption that they were enemy vehicles. The entire platoon was destroyed.<sup>17</sup>

At this point the 117th Infantry Regiment, 30th Infantry Division, with its attached armored elements had completed that phase of operations directly associated with the study of night attacks being presented in this report. This action represents the more deliberate or preplanned type of night attack in contrast to the unplanned type of operations such as that conducted by the 10th Armored Division presented in Chapter 3.

---

#### NOTES FOR CHAPTER 2

1

Lieutenant Colonel W. D. Duncan, "Tanks and Infantry in Night Attacks", The Armored Cavalry Journal, January-February, 1948, p. 57.

2

Ibid.

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Ibid.

4

117th Infantry Regiment, Resume of Operations for Month of February 1945 (AGO Microfilm Item No. 3056), p 1-3.

5  
Duncan, Op cit, p 58.

6  
After-Action Report, 743d Tank Battalion, February 1945,

p 17.

7  
Duncan, Op cit, p 58.

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Op cit, Resume of Operations, p 2.

9  
Duncan, Op cit, p 58.

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Op cit, Resume of Operations, p 2.

13  
Op cit, Tanks and Infantry in Night Attacks, p 59.

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17  
Op cit, After-Action Report, p 19.



## CHAPTER 3

### 10th ARMORED DIVISION ATTACK OF TRIER

The action presented in this Chapter depicts a night operation by a division size unit. This operation was not deliberately planned but was executed in order to take advantage of daylight gains.

#### General Situation

The operation in the SAAR-MOSELLE TRIANGLE conducted by the U. S. XX Corps met with such unexpected success that organized resistance within the triangle was broken much sooner than had been anticipated. The German 256th Volksgrenadier Division and the 416th Infantry Division had been decimated by the American attack and were in a state of confusion. It was decided to take advantage of this situation and move the 10th Armored Division and the 94th Infantry Division east across the SAAR River in the vicinity of OCKFEN and TABEN and to attack north with the 10th Armored Division to capture TRIER before the Germans could reorganize and defend this all important communication center of western Germany. The seizure of TRIER would unhinge the SIEGFRIED LINE at one of its critical points. Its capture was of great importance to the XX Corps. The necessity for speed and constant pressure against the weakening enemy made it imperative that the 10th Armored Division push the attack night and day. It is this night operation of the 10th Armored Division in its capture of TRIER that will be discussed in the ensuing chapter. Since this operation was

continuous, it will be necessary to follow through both day and night operations keeping in mind that our primary interest is the night operation.<sup>1</sup>

Three armored infantry battalions of the 10th Armored Division together with the attached 376th Regimental Combat Team, 94th Infantry Division, in compliance with XX Corps orders, crossed the SAAR north of OCKFEN the evening of 24 February 1945.<sup>2</sup> They pushed south and captured the road center of IRSCH by midnight of the same day. The morning of 26 February the armor of the two Combat Commands, CCA and CCB, began crossing at TABEN (south of BEURIG). The plan was to pick up the dismounted armored infantry at IRSCH, push east to NIEDERZERF, relieving a Ranger unit there<sup>3</sup> and then strike north to PELLINGEN and thence on to TRIER. (fig 4)

To oppose this plan, the enemy had available, in addition to the motley array of divisional remnants, fortress battalions, march groups, and volksturm, the newly arrived 2d Mountain Division which had been badly mauled in the fighting in ALSACE. The 2d Mountain was no longer a first class fighting unit but, unlike the hapless 256th Volksgrenadier Division and the 416th Infantry Division that had been decimated in the MOSELLE TRIANGLE operation, it still functioned as a Division and its sudden appearance on the scene emphasized the necessity for speed if the initial success of XX Corps in the TRIANGLE was to be profitably exploited.

The enemy was further assisted in his defense of TRIER by the terrain, which was most unfavorable to armored operation.

Between NIEDERZERF and TRIER there lay a succession of hills and deep valleys which afforded the defender excellent positions for gun emplacements. The one road capable of sustaining rapid armored advance in this direction ran along the crest of the ridge stretching from NIEDERZERF, eleven miles north through PELLINGEN, to TRIER. The armor unable to leave this road would be forced to advance under constant observed fire from both east and west.

At midnight on 26 February CCA struck out toward TRIER while CCB remained to hold the "hot corner" at NIEDERZERF. CCA found progress initially slow through the heavy woods which lay immediately north of NIEDERZERF. The lead elements of CCA, Task Force Chamberlain, finally succeeded on 27 February in breaking clear of the forest and by a direct frontal tank attack reduced the enemy force at STEINBACH. They then pushed on to PELLINGEN where they ran into a minefield covered by antitank fire. Engineers were sent to clear the mines. Early on the morning of 28 February a path was cleared through the minefield and the tanks moved out to take up positions dominating PELLINGEN from the south. The infantry, aided by fire from the tanks, reduced the outer defenses of PELLINGEN and went on to clear the town before noon.

On 28 February, to speed up the attack, the full resources of the 10th Armored Division were thrown into the battle. Elements of CCA were directed to discontinue their advance to the north and to turn west to seize KONZ-KARTHAUS thereby blocking any attempt by the forces pocketed between that town and OCKFEN to intervene

in the TRIER action. Other elements of CCA were to continue directly to TRIER. Those forces of CCB and CCA holding NIEDERZERF were ordered to move into TRIER upon relief by 1st Battalion, 301st Infantry Regiment, 94th Infantry Division. <sup>6</sup>

On 1 March elements of CCA drove into KONZ-KARTHAUS and having cleared the town by noon, set up blocking positions to the south and thereafter protected the Division left flank. The remainder of CCA drove straight on to TRIER, but was prevented from making an immediate entry into the city by a roadblock at the southern outskirts. Elements of CCB, moving out at midnight 1 March, began advancing on TRIER by way of the LAMPADEN-OLIMUTH-OLEWIG road. This road had previously been cleared in the course of hard fighting through heavily defended minefields by other elements of CCB which had acted as right flank security for CCA in its drive towards TRIER. Task Force Haskell of CCB was held up at the outskirts of TRIER, but Task Force Richardson, CCB, was able to slip into the city early in the morning of 2 March and seize intact the old ROMAN bridge which was the principle highway crossing over the MOSELLE River. Shortly thereafter the Task Forces of Norris, CCA, and Haskell also entered the city and by the end of the day TRIER had been cleared and was being outposted as far as the line <sup>8</sup> of the RUWER River by elements of the 10th Armored Division. (fig 4)

With the capture of TRIER, XX Corps had secured one of the chief cities of western Germany and deprived the enemy of the full effectiveness of his defenses in the EIFEL and in the SAAR Basin.

A discussion of the various Task Forces comprising the Combat Commands of the 10th Armored Division and their detailed operations in the seizure of TRIER is as follows:

The Action of Task Force Richardson (CCB) in TRIER Operation

T F RICHARDSON

---

20th Armored Infantry Battalion (-A and C Companies)  
Company B, 21st Tank Battalion  
One Section, Company D, 21st Tank Battalion  
3d Platoon, Company B, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion  
2d Platoon, Company A, 609th Tank Destroyer Battalion

Figure 5 Organization of Task Force Richardson

On the morning of 27 February, elements of CCB, commanded by Lt. Col. Richardson, reorganized in NIEDERZERF. Task Force Richardson was given the mission of blocking any counter-thrust at NIEDERZERF while other armored forces of CCB turned the elbow at NIEDERZERF and advanced northward to TRIER to protect the right flank of CCA. Task Force Richardson was relieved of the blocking mission by the 1st Battalion, 301st Infantry, 94th Infantry Division, which took over and held the high ground to the east of NIEDERZERF and on 1 March the Task Force was ordered to move to TRIER.

~~The column moved from NIEDERZERF the afternoon of 1 March~~  
to a crossroad west of LAMPADEN where it halted and awaited orders from CCB whose Command Post was located at OBERSEHR. Orders received were to the effect that the 10th Armored Division would attack TRIER that night and the mission of Task Force Richardson

was to move into TRIER and seize intact, if possible, the two bridges over the MOSELLE River in the city. The time of attack was to be 012200 March.

10

The column moved out on schedule on a clear night with a full moon and excellent visibility and continued to the small village of IRSCH where an undefended roadblock was encountered. The lead tank fired two 75mm rounds at the roadblock and the German garrison in the village immediately surrendered. The column continued into the city limits of TRIER, near the railroad crossing, where a company of surprised German infantry and four anti-tank guns were captured without a round being fired. Evidently the Americans had not been expected in that part of the city so soon. One of the prisoners taken at the railroad crossing had been detailed to notify an enemy party on the far side of the south bridge in TRIER upon the arrival of the Americans and a demolition party was in turn supposed to blow the structure upon sighting American tanks.

11

Feeling that if the south bridge was attacked directly it would, in all likelihood, be blown immediately, Colonel Richardson decided to attack the northern bridge first. A team commanded by Captain Billet was sent to take that bridge and a team commanded by Lieutenant Riley was to follow ready to cut through the city from the north and capture the south bridge. At 010200 March, Captain Billet reported the north bridge already demolished. Colonel Richardson then ordered Lieutenant Riley to the other bridge and

shortly thereafter Lieutenant Riley reported by radio to Colonel Richardson "Have reached bridge. Bridge intact. Am receiving small arms fire". Colonel Richardson hurriedly moved to the bridge in his tank and directed its seizure from that point. Lieutenant Riley's men were defending against small arms fire but had done nothing about getting to the western side of the bridge. Fifty-caliber machine gun fire from Colonel Richardson's tank was directed at the western approaches of the span while a platoon of tanks and a platoon of dismounted infantry under Lieutenant Fletcher crossed the bridge, expecting to have it disappear from under them at any moment. They crossed the bridge just in time to seize a German Major and five German enlisted men rushing toward it with detonating caps and an exploder.

A detail of men cut all wires leading to the bridge and the remaining men and tanks which had crossed formed a small bridgehead at its approaches. The German Major, worried about the fact that he had failed in his duty, and wishing to conceal the fact from higher German Army Commanders, told his captors that 17 other German officers were having a party down the street. The 17 were in the house as reported, about 200 yards from the western entrance to the bridge, and were captured without a fight.

By 021000 March, Task Force Richardson had taken 800 prisoners who had emerged from nearby houses dumbfounded to find American troops within the city when the last they knew, fighting was going on in the outskirts. The command post was established

in the early hours of the morning in a house in the city.

Task Force Richardson held the MOSELLE River line in the city and the ROMAN bridge they had seized, while other elements of the 10th Armored Division followed into the city and completed the mopping up. (fig 6)

The Action of Task Force Chamberlain in the TRIER Operation

T F CHAMBERLAIN

---

11th Tank Battalion (-Companies C and D)  
Company C, 54th Armored Infantry Battalion  
1st Platoon, Company A, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion  
1st Platoon, Company B, 609th T D Battalion

Organized into the following teams for combat utilization:

- Team O'Grady (Capt. William O'Grady, CO, Company B, 11th Tank Battalion)  
Company B, 11th Tank Battalion  
2d Platoon, Company C, 54th Armored Infantry Battalion  
1st Squad, 1st Platoon, Company A, 55th Armd Engr Bn.  
Assault Gun Platoon, 11th Tank Battalion  
Forward Observer, 419th F A Bn. (Lt. Downing)  
Radio Operator, 419th F A Bn. (Sgt. A. Enos)
- Team Shaddeau (Capt. William Shaddeau, CO, Company A, 11th Tank Battalion)  
Company A (-2d Platoon), 11th Tank Battalion  
1st Platoon, Company C, 54th Armd Inf Battalion  
2d Squad, 1st Platoon, Company A, 55th Armd Engr Bn.  
Mortar Platoon, 11th Tank Battalion  
Forward Observer, 419th Armd F A Bn. (Lt. Woodson)

- 
- Team Eisberg (Capt. A. R. Eisberg, CO, Company C, 54th Armd Infantry Battalion)  
Company C (-1st and 2d Platoons), 54th Armd Inf Bn.  
2d Platoon, Company A, 11th Tank Battalion

Figure 7 Organization of Task Force Chamberlain

At 262307 February, orders were received by Task Force



Chamberlain to form the infantry and tanks into a task force, move east to NIEDERZERF, then strike north to PELLINGEN and continue on to TRIER. At approximately midnight on 26 February the Task Force moved out in march column, under enemy artillery and mortar fire and turned north at NIEDERZERF at 270130 February. Beyond NIEDERZERF the Task Force moved in column with the infantry covering the front and flanks. At 270200 February, bazooka and direct artillery fire was received from a woods to the left flank. The woods were cleared for a depth of 1,000 yards in a two hour fight and the Task Force coiled in position until dawn. At 0545 hours the Task Force again moved forward. Cross-country employment of the force was not feasible because of the steep, heavily wooded hills, around which the north road passed. Progress was slow as four pillboxes enroute were stormed and destroyed as well as a heavily defended troop shelter at STEINBACH, however, as soon as the woods had been passed, Team O'Grady passed through the infantry and moved cross-country. Beyond STEINBACH the tanks ran into a minefield and two tanks were disabled. Simultaneously, heavy artillery and mortar fire was brought down on the Task Force from a bare ridge 500 yards to the front. Colonel Chamberlain ordered the attached engineers forward to clear the minefield and thus permit the employment of his tank teams on the flanks of the German position. By 280115 February, passage had been cleared through the 300 yard deep belt of mines and the tanks again moved forward. Colonel Chamberlain planned for Team Shaddeau to stay on the ridge which dominated the town of

PELLINGEN, to send Team O'Grady along the ridge 1,000 yards to the right where its guns could further assist from the right flank, and for Team Eisberg to attack along the road north into PELLINGEN. At 280500 February, the attack jumped off as planned and the infantry worked its way into PELLINGEN after the tanks had softened it up by firing as artillery batteries. <sup>16</sup>

This action was completed at 281130 February and Task Force Chamberlain was then ordered to clear KONZ-KARTHAUS and protect the left flank of the 10th Armored Division during its drive into TRIER. <sup>17</sup>

At 020855 March the tanks of Teams O'Grady and Shaddeau positioned themselves on the high ground overlooking KONZ-KARTHAUS where they could support the attack on the town by Team Eisberg. After an hour's bombardment the infantry of Team Eisberg entered and cleared the town on the morning of 2 March. The Task Force thereafter continued its mission of protecting the left flank of the division without incident. <sup>18</sup> (fig 4)

The Action of Task Force Haskell in the TRIER Operation

T F HASKELL

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Company B, 54th Armored Infantry Battalion  
Company C, 11th Tank Battalion  
1st Platoon, Company C, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion  
2d Platoon, Company B, 609th T D Battalion

Figure 8 Organization of Task Force Haskell

On the 28th of February, 1945, Task Force Haskell jumped

off from BALDRINGEM at 0310 hours. The Task Force attacked north and took the town of PASCHEL against moderate resistance and continued the attack to the north. The roads were found to be impassable and reconnaissance was instituted at once for new routes. After new routes had been reconnoitered, Task Force Haskell continued the attack north and mopped up the town of OBERSEHR by 281230 February. Contact was made with Task Force Chamberlain which was on the left flank and both Task Forces then continued the attack to the north. A minefield encountered by Task Force Haskell north of OBERSEHR was cleared by 281930 February and the attack continued. Many prisoners were taken from a number of miscellaneous units which the enemy had hastily organized the previous evening. Officers from these conglomerate units surrendered in sheer desperation rather than lead such troops.

19

By 010030 March, Task Force Haskell had occupied a hill about four kilometers southeast of TRIER. There they were brought under heavy artillery fire which included a high percentage of air bursts. This fire was the preparation for a limited counter-attack made by the enemy at 010130 March. The enemy attacked using Panzerfausts with which they scored three direct hits on our tanks but inflicted no appreciable damage. The attack was repulsed and the enemy withdrew in apparent confusion. A platoon from Company B, 54th Armored Infantry Battalion, reinforced with a section of Tank Destroyers were sent to the east of the hill at 0230 to silence enemy gun positions. They returned at 0330 with mission accomplished.

At 0700 the attack on TRIER continued but the enemy caught part of the column still in the assembly area and a terrific toll of men and vehicles resulted. By 010900 March, the town of FILSCH had been taken after a terrific fight. The Task Force continued and it was not until 011630 March that the town of TERFORST was taken and cleared even though the attack had commenced at 1100 that morning. It was now necessary to reorganize the Task Force and Company B, 54th Armored Infantry Battalion, was consolidated as were the tanks of the 21st Tank Battalion. All available men such as radio operators, wire men, etc., were incorporated into the assaulting troops. By 1900 the reorganization had been completed and the attack pushed forward with the leading elements running into a mine field almost immediately. At 012005 March, Task Force Haskell was ordered by the Commanding General to operate under the control of CCB. While the infantry neutralized the protecting fire the attached platoon of engineers cleared the mine field. At 012300 March, the Task Force entered the outskirts of TRIER and by 020830 March, positions within the city had been consolidated and the CP set up in the Porta Negri Hotel, TRIER. The greater part of the attack had been performed at night without an opportunity for daylight reconnaissance or careful detailed planning. During the operation two 90mm AA, twelve 88mm AT, four 40mm AA, and eight 20mm guns had been captured together with 72 PWs and an estimated 200 casualties inflicted upon the enemy. (fig 4)

The Action of Task Force Norris in the TRIER Operation

Task Force Norris (detailed organization unknown) was alerted on 28 February 1945, by the Commanding General, CCA, to move on the route of advance of Task Force Chamberlain until committed on Combat Command order. At the time of receipt of this order the Task Force was located at IRSCH. It moved out at 281000 February and reached the tail of Task Force Chamberlain at a point approximately two miles southeast of OBEREMMEL. After Task Force Chamberlain had been ordered to discontinue its advance on TRIER and attack west to seize KONZ-KARTHAUS, Task Force Norris was ordered to pass through Task Force Chamberlain and continue north to TRIER. This pass-through began at the town of PELLINGEN and the lead team, Team Maher, completed the pass-through by 281750 February. Team Maher made slow progress on the morning 1 March after advancing north of PELLINGEN with road craters, heavy 88mm, 105mm anti-tank and small arms fire holding up the advance. Team Brown of Task Force Norris jumped off and progressed 300 yards north of PELLINGEN by 011410 March and at 1535 was located northeast of OBERMENNIG. On 2 March Task Force Norris reorganized with Team Brown leading. Team Brown moved into TRIER in the vicinity of the railroad tracks and by 1017 both teams were reported clearing the enemy out of the southern portion of TRIER. By 1105 Task Force Norris was in contact with friendly units and reorganizing for the next operation.

24

The Action of Task Force Riley (later Task Force Roberts)  
in the TRIER Operation

T F RILEY

21st Tank Battalion (-B and 1 Section Company D)  
Company A, 20th Armored Infantry Battalion  
Company C, 20th Armored Infantry Battalion  
1st and 2d Platoons, Company B, 55th Armd Engr Bn.  
2d Platoon, Company A, 609th T D Battalion

Included in the above is a sub-team, Team Brown, as follows:

Company C, 21st Tank Battalion  
Company C, 20th Armored Infantry Battalion  
1 Half-track from Hq CCB  
1 Platoon, Company D, 21st Tank Bn. (-1 Section)

Figure 9 Organization of Task Force Riley

Task Force Riley attacked HENTERN at 280815 February 1945, and by 1255 HENTERN had been cleared. However, the advancing column encountered a heavily defended roadblock northeast of town which, together with heavy concentrations of artillery fire, greatly hampered progress of the Task Force. Operations were stalemated for a short period until the Task Force by-passed this obstacle to the west and thereafter, progress was rapid. By 1715 lead elements had contacted elements of Task Force Haskell (CCA) and the Combat Command Commander sent immediate instructions to the Task Force to get abreast and to the left of Task Force Haskell and to push the attack vigorously.

At 010200 March, Task Force Riley had reached a crossroad south of HOCKWEILER however, enemy dual purpose antiaircraft weapons on the high ground north of TRIER greatly hampered movements.

At 011540 March, because of physical exhaustion, the CG CCB relieved Lt. Col. Riley and his executive officer, Major Brown. The CCB Executive Officer, Lt. Col. Roberts and the S-2, Major Johnson, took over duties of the CO and Executive Officer respectively. By 2010 Task Force Haskell and Task Force Roberts (formerly Task Force Riley) jointly were attacking along the high ground west of HOCKWEILER. By 2300 both Task Forces were on the outskirts of TRIER receiving light artillery and mortar fire. At 020315 March, the 1st Battalion, 376th Infantry, 94th Infantry Division, joined Task Force Roberts for the assault on the city of TRIER and by 021240 March, all troops of the Task Force were in the city. (fig 6)<sup>25</sup>

The Action of Task Force Cherry in the TRIER Operation

T F CHERRY

3d Tank Battalion (-Companies A and B, 2 Platoons, Company D)  
Company A, 61st Armored Infantry Battalion  
1st Platoon, Company B, 609th T D Battalion  
3d Platoon, Company C, 55th Armored Engineer Battalion

Figure 10 Organization of Task Force Cherry

Task Force Cherry, Reserve Command, left an assembly area in the vicinity of STEINBACH at 010130 March 1945, and marched to the vicinity of OBERSEHR. Defensive positions were occupied at OBERSEHR with Team Davis occupying high ground northeast of OBERSEHR and the remainder of the Task Force occupying a position at the south edge of town. At 010900 March, the Task Force, Team Wall leading, moved from OBERSEHR and followed Task Force Riley. <sup>26</sup>

At 1300 the Task Force received the mission, through a liaison officer, to by-pass anything in front of them and cut the main roads running northeast from TRIER. Team Wall moved out and reached the high ground south of the TRIER-EITELSBACH road but was forced to withdraw slightly because of direct anti-tank fire which knocked out three tanks. Team Davis by-passed Team Wall to the west and cut the road along the MOSELLE River northeast of TRIER. After Team Davis reached their objective, they placed direct fire and artillery on enemy vehicles trying to move along the road running from TRIER to EHRANG on the west side of the river. At 2205 Team Wall reached their objective astride the road running northeast from TRIER to EITELSBACH.

At 020200 March, Team Wall moved out to attack the city of TRIER in conjunction with Team Lang from CCA. Both Teams were halted by a roadblock at the entrance to the city. After the roadblock had been reduced Team Wall moved into and occupied the northern part of TRIER meeting very little resistance.

The capture of TRIER completed the operation under consideration, which was the unplanned night attack by a division size unit.

An example of a small unit night attack conducted under similar circumstances is presented in the next chapter by the actions of 4th Armored Division units.

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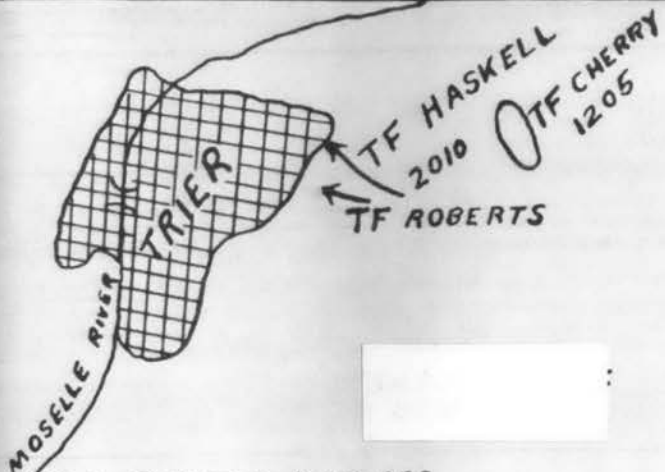
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Fig 4



29  
+ 27

Map: Germany, 1:100,000  
GSGS 4416, SHEETS UI+VI

20  
+ 23

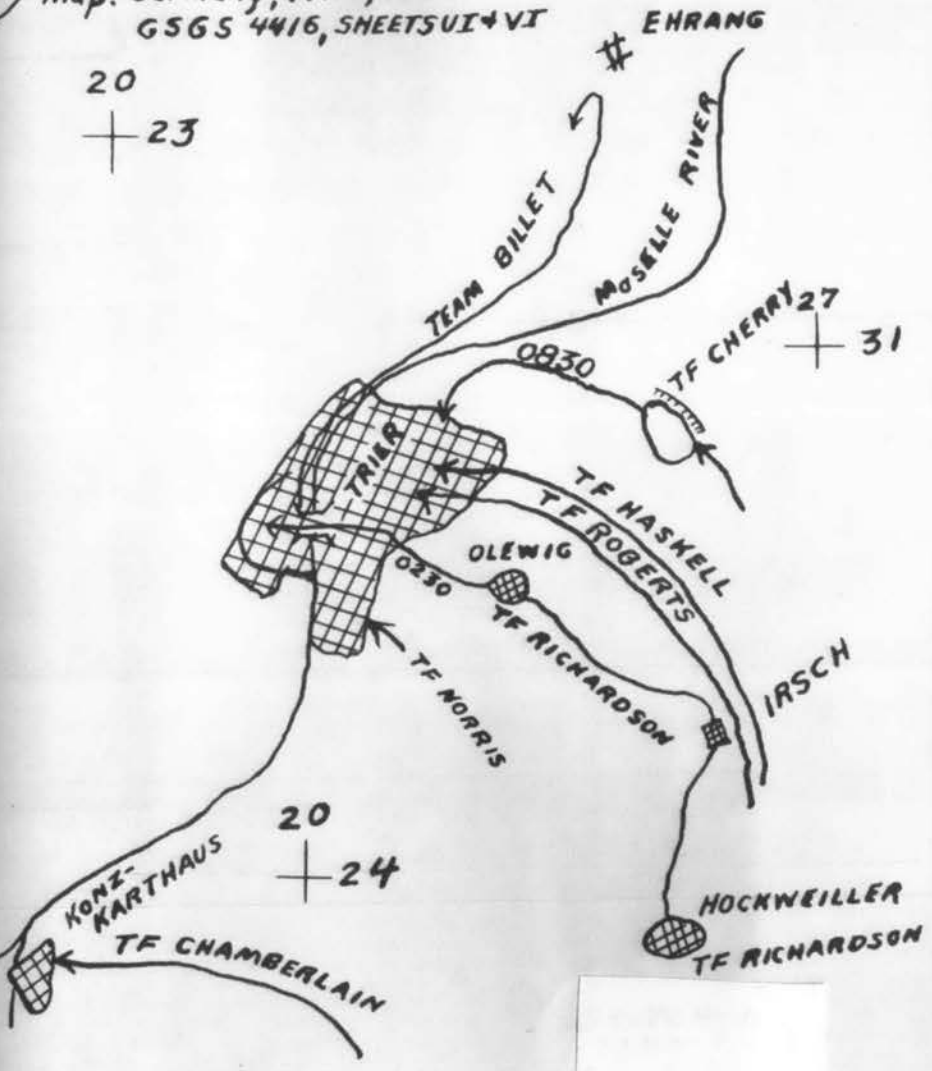


Fig 6

## CHAPTER 4

### 4TH ARMORED DIVISION IN ATTACK OF MARTELANGE AND WARNACH, BELGIUM

Two small unit night-attacks were made by elements of the 4th Armored Division in its drive to relieve the beleaguered forces occupying BASTOGNE in December 1944. Since these attacks were actually only continuations of daylight attacks launched on preceding days it is necessary to go into the daylight actions in some detail in order to understand the operations and how they came about.

#### The General Situation

During the night of the 20th and the morning of the 21st the Germans driving west had flanked BASTOGNE on the north and south. The two enemy forces met west of BASTOGNE thus completely encircling the town. The 101st Airborne together with elements of the 9th and 10th Armored Divisions were trapped in BASTOGNE.<sup>1</sup>

Road blocks and demolitions were set up to halt the rapid advance of the enemy whose strength in the BASTOGNE area was placed at one panzer and one infantry division.<sup>2</sup> Plans were made to counter-attack to relieve the troops that were trapped in BASTOGNE.

The III Corps, acting as a portion of the United States Third Army had previously moved into position along a general east-west line running through ARLON, BELGIUM, prepared to attack north toward BASTOGNE. On the 21st of December orders were issued

that the III Corps would attack with three divisions abreast, the 4th Armored on the left, the 26th Infantry in the center, and the 80th Infantry on the right.<sup>3</sup>

Plans for the Employment

The 4th Armored Division planned to attack 220600 December (Friday). CCA and CCB were to attack with CCA on the right. The Reserve Command was to follow CCA and be prepared to reinforce either combat command or to repel counter-attacks from either flank. Radio silence was to be maintained until actual contact was made with the enemy.<sup>4</sup>

CCA assembled in the vicinity of WOLKRANGE and TOERNICH in the afternoon and later under cover of darkness moved to the attack position at QUANTREVENTS, north of ARLON. Troop assignments and the task organization of CCA were:

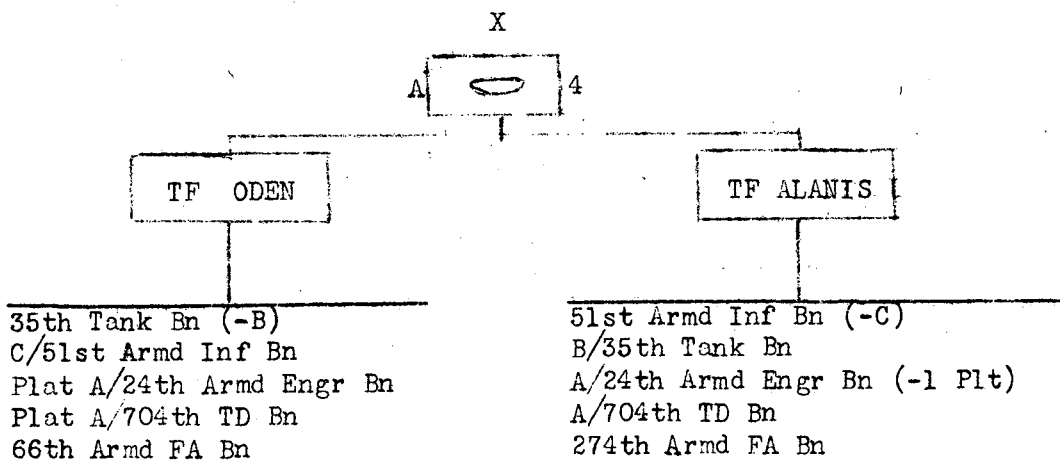


Figure 11 Task Organization of CCA

The Attack on MARTELANGE

At 220600 December (Friday) CCA led by Troop A, 25th Cavalry



Squadron which had been attached to CCA for the operation moved out from the assembly area in the vicinity of QUANTREVENTS. The right column, Task Force Oden, passed through BONNERT and OBER-PALLEN but was stopped by a blown bridge at NIEDER COLBACH. (fig 12) The route was altered and the column proceeded to GRENDDEL, NOTHOMB, PARAETTE and then merged with the left column, Task Force Alanis on the ARLON-BASTOGNE highway. At HINSCHEID, Task Force Oden left the main highway and proceeded east through PERLE and then turned north to WOLWELANGE. Their mission was to block all roads leading east from MARTELANGE, and to set up a base of fire for an assault on MARTELANGE by Task Force Alanis.

Task Force Alanis departed from the assembly area and proceeded north until it hit the ARLON-BASTOGNE Highway. In the vicinity of HONSCHEID a huge crater in the road forced a halt until the crater was bridged. In spite of these delays plans for the attack of MARTELANGE were completed about noon. Task Force Alanis was to make the main effort against the town supported by fires of Task Force Oden from positions on high ground north of PERLE. At 1200 hours Major Dan C. Alanis, commanding the force making the main effort, issued the following order to his troops:

En rptd in and around MARTELANGE; A/25 recd MG fire from W end of HAUT MARTELANGE.

Task Force Oden supports us by fire from high ground W of PERLE.

Task Force Alanis atks immediately to clear MARTELANGE, and secure a crossing over the river.

Formations: A/51 and B/51 abreast, A on the right.

Boundry between Cos; ARLON-BASTOGNE highway.

A/51 on foot, supported by plat B/35, clears HAUT MARTELANGE, outposts it, prepared to continue on to river

abreast of B/51 and secure bridgehead.

B/51, mounted on 2 plat B/35 and Sect A/704, moves out when A/51 reaches HAUT MARTELANGE, and clears W side of town up to the river, prepared to secure a bridgehead.

A/24 be prepared to repair MARTELANGE bridge after bridgehead is secured.

CP initially at P564357\*, then follows axis of advance. Hand-carry radios.

\*In the vicinity of the railroad station at NEUPERLE.

At 1330 Company A, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, supported by a platoon of tanks from Company B, 35th Tank Battalion, attacked HAUT-MARTELANGE (fig 14) and within half an hour had occupied the western portion of the town without having met resistance. At approximately 1400 Company B, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, mounted on two platoons of tanks of Company B, 35th Tank Battalion and the tank destroyers of a section of Company A, 704th Tank Destroyer Battalion, moved out to clear the portion of MARTELANGE west of the main ARLON-BASTOGNE road up to the river. This part of the town was built on successive levels with the enemy occupying the buildings on the higher ground. As this force was near the center of the town, considerable small arms and bazooka fire was received from buildings on the west side and above the street. Bitter street fighting continued all afternoon in the center of the town, and in spite of heavy artillery fire placed on the west side of the town enemy resistance continued.

#### The Night Attack

The Division had orders to continue the attack through the night, consequently a tank-infantry team composed of Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion and Company A, 35th Tank Battalion,

was attached to Task Force Alanis from Task Force Oden. This force launched an attack at 1800 under cover of darkness to clear out the resistance in the buildings on the high ground west of the main street. <sup>8</sup> Bright moonlight and new fallen snow made personnel moving in the open an easy target for the enemy's automatic weapons. <sup>9</sup> This force, which joined Task Force Alanis from Task Force Oden, succeeded in moving forward to the river bank and in infiltrating small groups of infantry to the north bank. <sup>10</sup>

The tank-infantry night action engaged in, to clear the town to the streamline, was not a planned and coordinated attack, but rather in the form of mopping up operations to clear out isolated pockets of enemy resistance. <sup>11</sup> No reconnaissance was possible and the operation was conducted at night because time was a critical factor rather than because it was a choice of the commanders concerned.

By 0300 on the 23d the town was cleared of enemy to the SURE River. Both bridges over the river had been blown by the enemy but the one to the west, on the road to RADELANGE, was still passable to foot troops.

#### The Move to WARNACH

At 0300 Company A, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, from Task Force Alanis, started across the bridge in the face of heavy machine gun and small arms fire from the hill (HILL 2) to the northwest. By 0500 they had secured the hill and cleared the town sufficiently to permit bridging operations to get under way. A

90-foot Bailey bridge was completed at 1430, by the Corps engineers, and the combined forces of Task Force Oden and Task Force Alanis again got under way, being consolidated under the command of Lt. Col. Oden.

Resistance in the form of 20mm fire and dug-in infantry was met on the high ground (HILL 3) approximately two miles north of MARTELANGE. Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, riding the lead tanks of Task Force Oden suffered several casualties.<sup>12</sup> The enemy position was over-run, and the column again got under way at about 1800 hours. Losses for the engagement included a medium tank destroyed, three infantrymen killed and four infantrymen wounded.

In order to continue its advance the Task Force swung off the road to the west, leaving Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, to move on the main ARLON-BASTOGNE Highway to secure the right flank. As the leading personnel carriers of Company C came opposite WARNACH (fig 13) they received anti-tank, mortar and small arms fire from the direction of the town, which knocked out two personnel carriers. This incident occurred at approximately 1900 hours. By this time the balance of Task Force Oden had pushed ahead of Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, and it became evident that any further advance would leave an exposed flank against a known enemy; it was necessary to halt the advance of the main column until the situation in WARNACH could be cleared up.

### The Attack on WARNACH

At approximately 2000 Captain John A. Rankin, temporarily commanding Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, was ordered to attack WARNACH immediately, in spite of the fact that it was completely dark and that no daylight reconnaissance had been accomplished. The forces at Captain Rankin's disposal were to be Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, plus a platoon of medium tanks, supported by the 66th Armored Field Artillery. Approximately thirty minutes was allowed for reconnaissance and coordination. When the tank platoon reported to the team commander it turned out to be four light tanks instead of five mediums he had expected. The attack was launched at approximately 2030 in spite of the fact that the only artillery support which materialized was that of some 75mm assault guns. The initial penetration of the edge of the village was accomplished by 2100 against the stubborn resistance of the paratroop infantry holding it.

Approximately one third of the village had been cleared when the German infantry launched a counter-attack supported by Mark IV and Mark V tanks. The light tanks supporting Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, were no match for these vehicles and were quickly destroyed by the enemy. For unknown reasons the German armor did not continue to support the infantry. This enabled Company C, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, to hold its ground.

A counter-attack by the enemy at approximately 2300

consisting of infantry supported by artillery and tanks forced our troops to give ground. At 240400 Captain Rankin was ordered to withdraw his remaining forces to a protected area south and west of the town.

At approximately 0530 another attack was launched by Company B, 51st Armored Infantry Battalion, supported by tanks. This attack moved east across the road to attack WARNACH and was met at the outskirts of town by a hail of direct and small arms fire. Several hours of bitter street fighting drove the enemy armor and infantry into the northern portions of the town where they stubbornly defied efforts to dislodge them. At 0900 it was decided to withdraw the tank-infantry team slightly to the rear of the church, on the village square, in order to employ artillery fire safely. After the artillery softening, the attack was resumed and the fight continued throughout the day. In the course of this action our force captured 135 prisoners, knocked out an assault gun, two armored cars and a truck; captured three vehicles and an anti-tank gun; and rescued three men who had been held prisoners by the Germans. Much of the equipment used by the enemy was American. By 1715 the last of the enemy was cleared from WARNACH and an attempted enemy counter-attack from the woods east of town was repulsed by artillery fire.

This concluded the action against WARNACH and that part of the 4th Armored Division's operations which are of interest in regards to the night attack.

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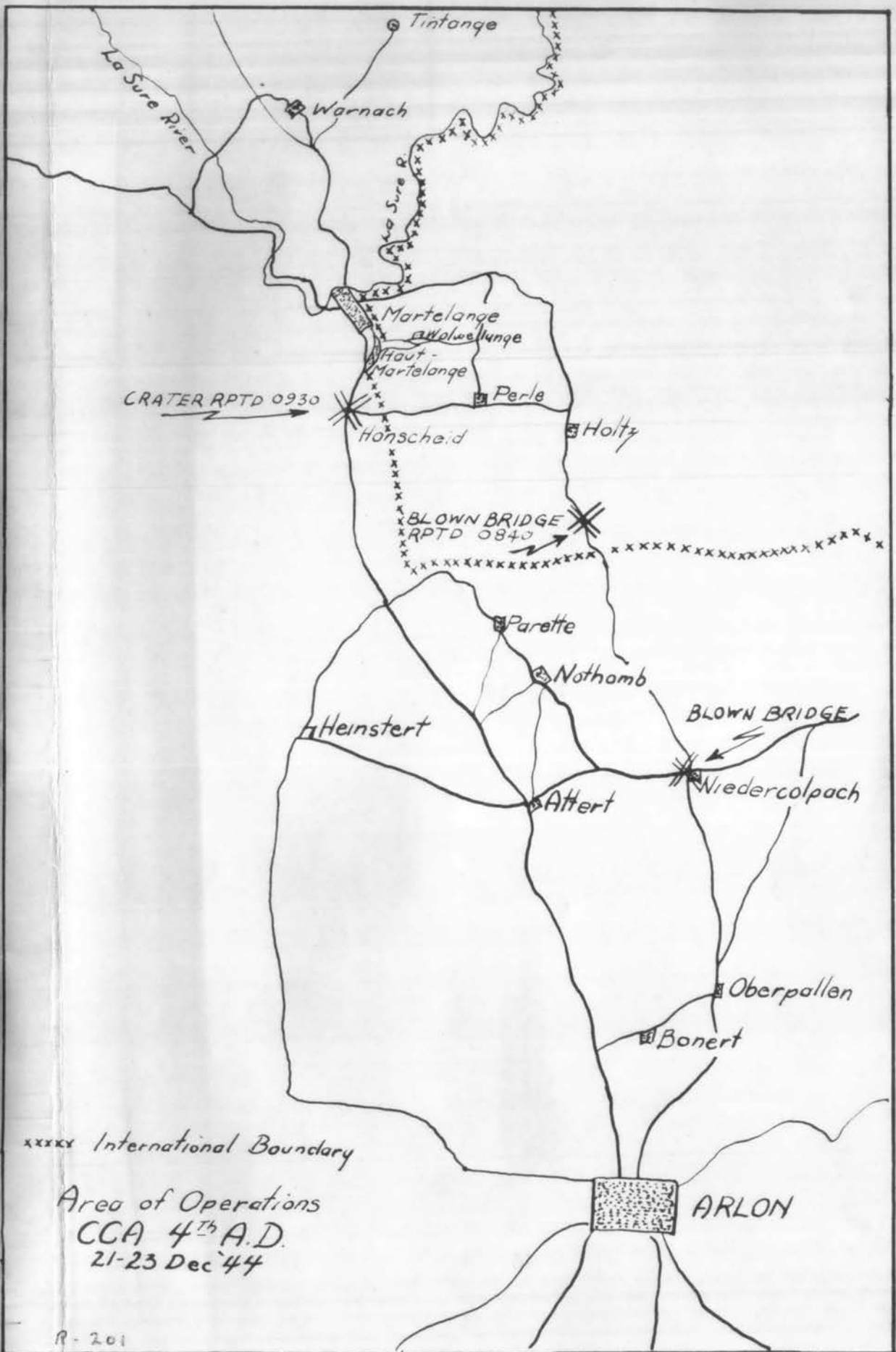
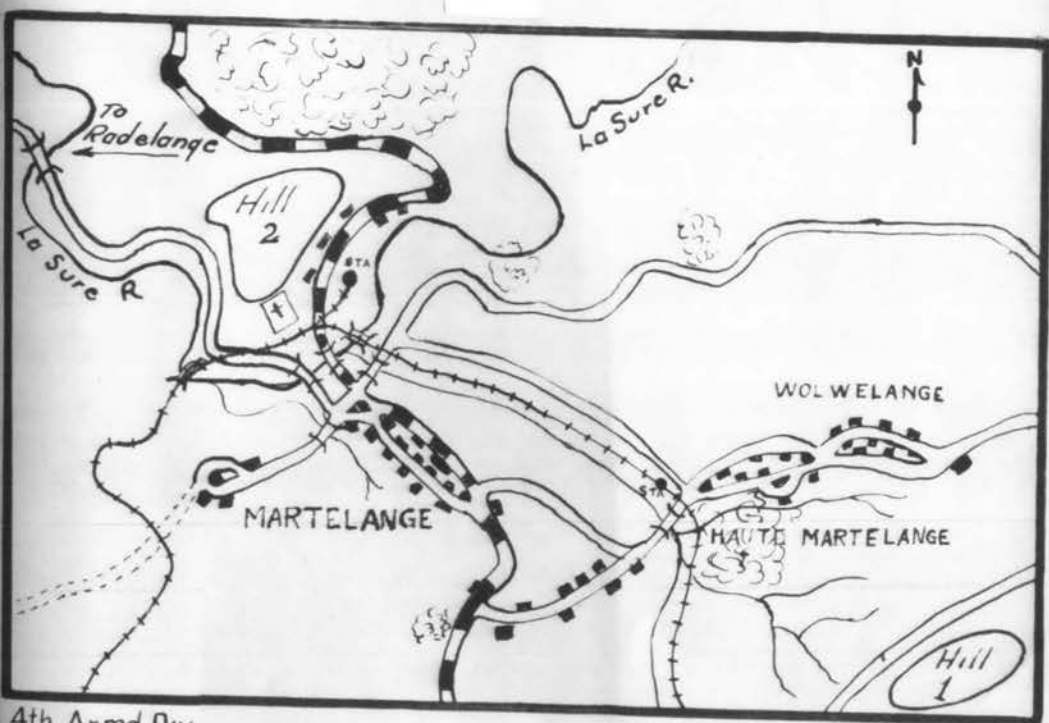
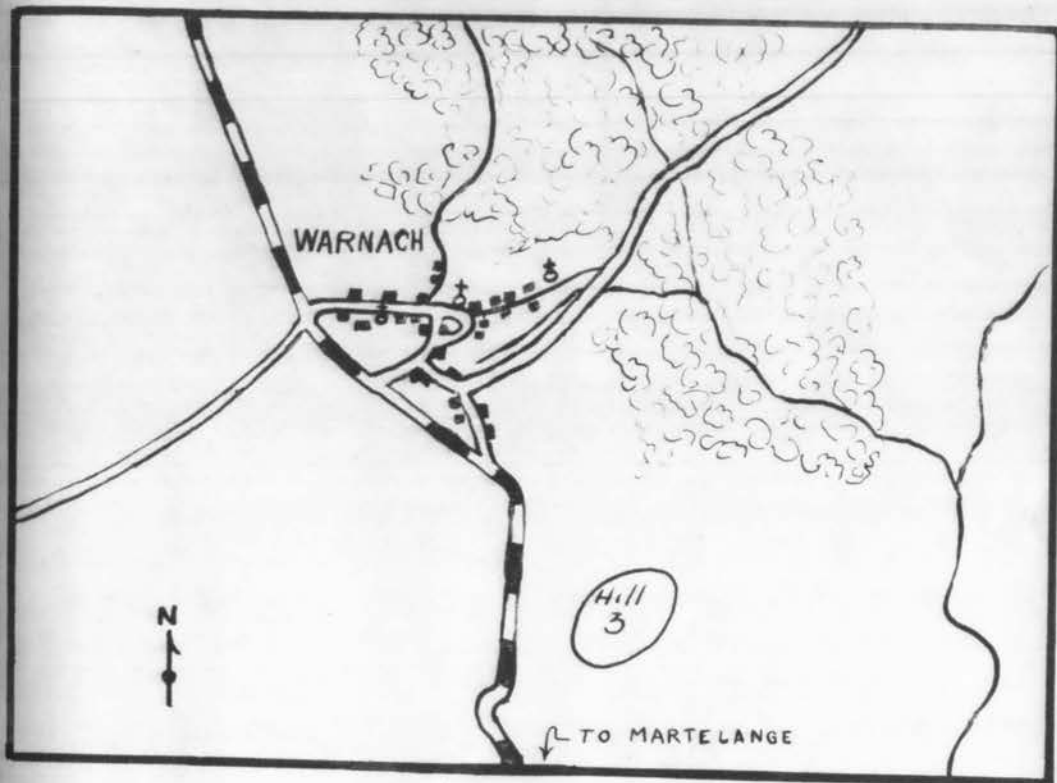




Fig 12



4th Armd Div  
Night Opns

R-201

21-23 Dec  
1944

Fig 13

Fig 14

## CHAPTER 5

### CANADIAN USE OF THE NIGHT ATTACK

The operations which have been discussed in the preceding chapters have given a general presentation of the tactics and techniques employed by United States armored units conducting night operations. In order to allow an accurate study and comparison of these tactics and techniques with those employed by other armies, the following account of a night operation by the British 51st (Highland) Division is presented in this chapter.

#### General Situation

For some time prior to 7 August 1944, the Canadians had been holding a defensive line which extended east and west across the CAEN-FALAISE road, about one and one-half miles south of CAEN (fig 15). The Corps along this sector planned to resume the offensive with the execution of an operation known as "Totalize" during the period 7-10 August. This offensive, planned in three phases, called for a general advance south by the Corps along the CAEN-FALAISE road.

Phase I was to be conducted by the 51st Highland Division on the night of 7 August with H hour set for 2330 with the purpose of capturing ST AIGNAN DE CRAMESNIL and all included towns and areas so marked on figure 15.

Phase II was to be conducted in daylight 9 August to capture BILLY, POUSSY-LA CAMPAGNE, and CONTEVILLE, while Phase III was to take place on the 10th to capture ST SYLVAIN. The final

consolidation of this last objective would take place on the night of 10 August.

Patrolling by units of the Corps showed the enemy to be in position in two defensive lines, the first of which extended through LA HOGUE-TILLY LA CAMPAGNE-ROQUANCOURT, and the second running from ST SYLVAIN west through GAUVICOURT and CINTHEAUX to BRETTEVILLE SUR-LAIZE. The enemy forces in this area were too small to occupy both lines at the same time. Consequently, strong points were organized on critical features around ROQUANCOURT, astride the CAEN-FALAISE road, at TILLY LA CAMPAGNE, in the woods (marked 1 on fig 15), and LA HOGUE. The right sector of this line was manned by elements of the German 272d Division and the left portion was held by the 89th Division which had recently relieved the 1st SS Panzer Division.

In this discussion we will consider only Phase I or the night attack by "Z" Infantry Brigade, 51st (Highland) Division. This division, composed as shown in fig 16, was to open this phase with an attack at 072330 August.

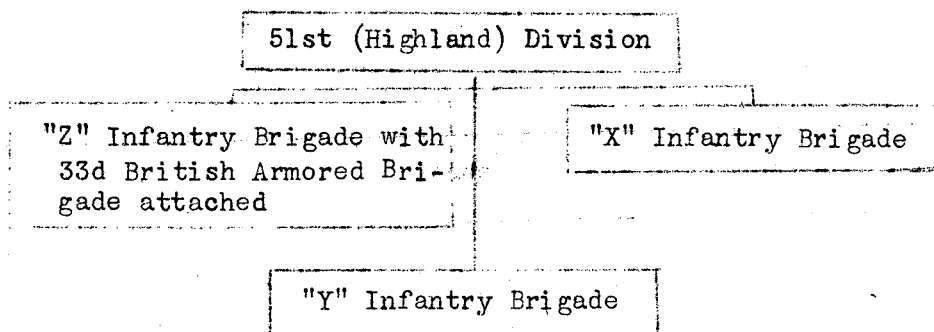


Fig 16 Organization for Phase I

"Z" Infantry Brigade with the 33d British Armored Brigade

attached, was to lead the division at H-hour by attacking through the center of the zone and capture GARCELLES-SECQUEVILLE, the woods (marked 2 on fig 15), CRAMESNIL, and ST AIGNAN DE CRAMESNIL.

"X" Infantry Brigade was to follow to the right and behind "Z" Infantry Brigade at H-hour and attack TILLY LA CAMPAGNE, LORGUICHON, and the railroad cut (marked 3 on fig 15). In addition, it was to provide one battalion to clear and occupy SECQUEVILLE LA CAMPAGNE.

"Y" Infantry Brigade was to move from its assembly area on order and attack and clear the woods (marked 4 on fig 15).

The division machine gun battalion was to cover the left flank of the Division until capture of the first objective was completed.

A squadron of Crocodiles (flame-throwing tanks) was to assemble at CORMELLES and to remain there until needed.

Heavy bombers were to plaster LA HOGUE, SECQUEVILLE LA CAMPAGNE, and the woods (marked 4 on fig 15).

The artillery plan called for a rolling Corps barrage to start at H plus 15 at a point just south of BOURGUEBUS and 1500 yards ahead of the line of departure. This barrage was to move forward along an axis parallel to the CAEN-FALAISE road at a rate of 100 yards per minute forming a wall of fire behind which the attacking troops would advance.

#### "Z" Infantry Brigade Plan

Based upon the Division plan, "Z" Infantry Brigade prepared

detailed plans for its part of the operation. It established close liaison with the 33d British Armored Brigade, constructed a sand table of the area, practiced night marches with armored units of the 33d British Armored Brigade and made maximum use of air photos in its prior planning.

Navigational aids consisted of Bofor firing over each route (columns) from the line of departure to the objective, wireless directional beams covering each route, and diffused lighting by searchlights.<sup>4</sup>

"Z" Infantry Brigade was to cross the line of departure in two columns, each consisting of an armored regiment and an infantry battalion. The axis of advance and objectives were as shown on fig 15. The infantry were to be carried in defrocked Priests (self propelled guns with the guns removed), scout cars, and carriers.<sup>5</sup> Organization of the columns is as shown in fig 17.

The routes of these columns were parallel with the CAEN-FALAISE road and were to by-pass TILLY LA CAMPAGNE. Initially each column was to be commanded by the armored regimental commander concerned who was responsible for the navigation of the column and for getting the infantry onto the objective.

"Z" Infantry Brigade

<u>Left Column</u>	<u>Right Column</u>
Navigating Tank	Navigating Tank
Flails	Flails
One Troop AVsRE (Engr's)	One Troop AVsRE (Engr's)
"K" Yeo (Arm'd)	"L" RAC (Arm'd)
"A" Battalion (Inf)	"C" Battalion (Inf)
	"M" RAC (Arm'd)
	"B" Battalion (Inf)

Figure 17 Organization of Columns

An example of the line-up of one of these columns is depicted below showing the detailed order of march of the left column. This column consisted of approximately 200 vehicles arranged in four files moving about 15 yards apart.

Two navigating tanks, one behind the other--the second tank being in reserve.

Two troops "A" Squadron, "K" Yeo with another reserve navigator.

Flails--four columns of five flails each.

Two troops "A" Squadron, "K" Yeo.

Hq "A" Squadron, "K" Yeo, Regt'l Hq less second in command "K" Yeo, with FOO (Forward observer) and Flail Squadron commander.

"C" Squadron, "K" Yeo.

"A" Battalion, second in command "K" Yeo with CO, "A" Battalion.

"B" Squadron, "K" Yeo less one troop.

Supporting weapons, "A" Battalion.

Armored reconnaissance vehicles, half-tracks, ambulances and bulldozers.

One troop, "B" Squadron, "K" Yeo.

#### Figure 18 Order of March, Left Column

##### Assault Plan

The infantry was to dismount at a hedge row about 1000 yards north of the objective, ST AIGNAN DE CRAMESNIL and its surrounding woods to the north, and to advance alone on foot. The tanks were to follow the infantry as soon as a means of getting through the hedge row could be found. This particular hedge row had been selected from air photographs because it appeared to give protection from enemy tank attacks. The signal for dismounting was to be sent back by radio by the navigator directly to the second in command of "K" Yeo who in turn was to relay it to the commanding officer of "A" Battalion. From this point it was to be



relayed orally from one carrier to the other. Upon receipt of this signal the carriers were to halt--not move up-- and the infantry were to dismount, organize along the hedge row, and continue on foot.

It should be remembered that Corps Artillery was to commence at H plus 15 some 1500 yards in advance of the line of departure. (Fig 15) In order to move up closely behind this barrage the columns had to cover this distance in about 18 minutes at night.

The assault plan of the right column is unknown, however, the route of this column is indicated on figure 15.

#### Conduct of the Attack

At 072200 August the two columns were formed in the vicinity of CORMELLES and began moving at 2215. The routes forward to the line of departure were lit by Royal Engineers. During this movement the heavy bombers worked over their previously assigned targets. Once across the line of departure, despite the elaborate plans for navigation, direction had to be maintained almost solely by compass. Dust from the bombing and later the artillery greatly restricted visibility. The diffused lighting was poor and the wireless directional beam was too inaccurate for use by the navigator of the left column. In addition he found that in order to concentrate on listening in on the beam, he was compelled to exclude all other messages. The most effective aid to navigation proved to be the Bofors which were firing along the route. As an

additional aid, the navigator of the left column periodically fired  
7  
Very lights to show his position. A nearly full moon had risen at  
about 0100 and this greatly improved visibility. The navigator  
succeeded in getting his column to within 50 yards of his mark  
along the thick hedge row which was to be the point for dismount-  
ing. However, reconnaissance of this area indicated a number of  
gaps and it was decided to continue with the infantry still mounted.  
In view of the fact that the infantry had already dismounted, about  
45 minutes were consumed in reorganizing, loading up, and getting  
started again. During this time a concentration was called down  
on the objective, ST AIGNAN DE CRAMESNIL. Moving through the  
hedge row, two squadrons of "K" Yeo shot up the objective and the  
third squadron protected the rear and left flank of the column.  
Enemy mortar fire was falling in the area but it was ineffective  
for the enemy did not know the exact location of the column.

At 0345 the tanks ceased their firing and "A" Battalion  
advanced through the hedge row, on carriers, to an orchard a few  
hundred yards north of the objective, then dismounted and proceeded  
on foot in their attack. Some opposition was met but the bulk of  
the enemy had withdrawn and only about 40 prisoners were taken.  
Guides from "A" Battalion went back about an hour later to bring  
up the tanks. By first light the town had been cleared and during  
the morning the surrounding woods were cleared.

Moving over to the right column we find that little inter-  
ference was encountered. The column was held up temporarily by

fire from the vicinity of LORQUICHON but this resistance was soon eliminated and "C" Battalion, having dismounted, attacked and seized this objective. Concurrent with this action, "B" Battalion, the right column reserve, captured GARCELLES-SECQUEVILLE. This completed the successful attack of "Z" Infantry Brigade, an attack conducted in darkness which produced very light casualties.

"X" Infantry Brigade was successful in their attack which followed on foot as originally planned. "Y" Infantry Brigade was relieved at 1200 on 8 August and was then committed to attack SECQUEVILLE LA CAMPAGNE. On the following day, 9 August, Phases II and III were completed, chiefly in daylight, final consolidation of the objectives taking place the night of 9-10 August.

Casualties suffered by "H" Infantry Division amounted to only 250, while it captured about 500 prisoners. <sup>8</sup> Only two tanks were lost with the left column during the conduct of Phase I.

An analysis of this operation furnishes several indications of great value in any proposed night offensive employing armor. In the first instance, armor was successfully used in close cooperation with infantry during this night attack. Detailed planning is of paramount importance when the night attack is to be undertaken and while darkness increases the problem of control, it also affords great protection to the attacker. The remaining outstanding revelation of this study clearly indicates that in employing artillery, the barrage was timed to move too rapidly for the tanks to follow.

NOTES FOR CHAPTER 5

1

Field Marshall the Viscount Montgomery of Alamein, Nor-  
mandy to the Baltic, (Boston; Houghton Mifflin Company, 1948),  
p 156.

2

Current Reports From Overseas No. 57, a report prepared  
under the direction of The Chief of the Imperial General Staff,  
The War Office 30 September 1944 (Inclosure 2 to Report No 1286-44  
Military Attache, London), p 2.

3

Maj. C. R. H. Porteous, Canadian Army, student, Armored  
Officers Advanced Course, 1949-1950, Fort Knox, Kentucky, personal  
interview.

4

Op cit, Current Reports From Overseas, p 3.

5

Porteous, Op cit.

6

Op cit, Current Reports From Overseas, p 3.

7

Op cit, Current Reports From Overseas, p 3.

8

Porteous, Op cit.

**H INF DIV IN  
OPERATION 'TOTALIZE'  
7 AUG TO 10 AUG**

1000 0 1000 2000 3000 Scale of yds

**LEGEND**  
 Brigade areas ————  
 Objectives - - - - -  
 Air targets .....  
 Enemy main defensive lines - - - - -



R-201

Fig 15

56a

## CHAPTER 6

### SUMMARY

In general, the preceding combat examples of armor in the night attack substantiate the present doctrine taught on this subject at The Armored School. A brief analysis of these examples point out places of agreement and some of disagreement.

The actions of the 30th Infantry Division in Chapter 2 support the teaching that night attacks are often less costly than daylight attacks. In the attack on LICH the Division captured its objective in two hours with light casualties. A later daylight operation by this unit against a similar village required 14 hours and resulted in heavy personnel casualties and a loss of eight tanks.

#### Reconnaissance

Thorough planning and reconnaissance are desirable factors of night operations. Where possible, on-the-ground reconnaissance should be conducted by commanders of the lowest units or teams. It is recognized that the existing situation will often limit reconnaissance to a detailed map study, air photo study, or sand table study. But even this should be conducted down to the lowest levels of command to effect proper control and coordination. The action by Canadian units described in Chapter 5 adhered to this principle.

On the other hand there are examples of successful night operations made with little or no reconnaissance and planning.

Such is the case of the attack of the 10th Armored Division on TRIER and the 4th Armored Division on MARTELANGE. This situation occurs most frequently when successful daylight operations have disorganized the enemy and it is desired to continue the operation through the night to exploit the day success. The hasty night attack must be recognized as a calculated risk which may result in failure. Such was evidenced in the attack on WARNACH.

#### Terrain

A consideration of terrain is important. Flat open terrain such as existed for the operations of the 30th Infantry Division permit the employment of battalion or regimental size units. Rough and irregular terrain forces the use of small units. This was apparent in the 4th Armored Division's attack on MARTELANGE.

#### Control

Control is probably the most important consideration in planning night operations. The extreme difficulty in controlling armored units during night attacks can only be overcome by close cooperation with supporting infantry, by excellent communications, and by extreme simplicity in artificial means of direction finding. In the preceding combat examples, such simple devices as guiding on burning buildings, following prominent roads, following tank tracks in soft earth, taking a compass direction, and firing overhead tracers were successfully used to establish direction. The one attempt by the Canadians to use radio direction beam failed.



Each squad or tank must be thoroughly familiar with its part in the operation. This should include line of departure, zone of attack, objectives, and defense of the objective if adequate coordination is to be expected.

It is particularly important that attached and supporting units be thoroughly oriented into the plan of action and the control measures adopted. This is shown by the unnecessary destruction of the British flail tank platoon described in Chapter 2.

Tank and infantry commanders maintain close contact with each other by riding in the same vehicle. This also makes it possible for the infantry commander to utilize the radio net of the tank unit.

#### Fire Support

Scheduled fires of supporting weapons must be flexible. When the advance is held up or the direction is lost, fire plans must be changed accordingly. This requires that forward observers be with leading elements.

Consideration must be given to the fact that dust and smoke from artillery fire and bombing may impair visibility.

White phosphorus shells may be used to mark the objective or to set it on fire. The 30th Infantry Division used this in its attacks as a means of control.

#### Conclusion

Any unit with proper training and equipment is capable of conducting night operations as a routine form of combat.

### Recommendations

1. That present doctrine be modified to include the use of hasty night attacks.
2. That additional emphasis be placed on the research for suitable directional control devices for armored units conducting night operations.
3. That the subject discussed herein be further developed by additional research.
4. That additional emphasis be placed on the conduct of night operations through instruction at The Armored School.

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### NOTES FOR CHAPTER 6

1

Lieutenant Colonel W. D. Duncan, Tanks and Infantry in Night Attacks (Washington: The Armored Cavalry Journal, January-February, 1948).



10th Arm'd Div  
TRIER  
March 1945



10th Armd Div  
TRIER  
March 1945