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GENERAL INSTRUCTION DEPARTMENT
THE ARMORED SCHOOL
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ADVANCED OFFICERS CLASS #1

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MILITARY MONOGRAPH

TITLE: Night Attacks, The Effect in World War II.

SCOPE: The characteristics and inherent difficulties are reviewed from various War Department Field Manuals. Secondly several observer reports are used to show the development of the night attack in World War II, Next are given examples of their use in the war by six Armored divisions to show the typical use of night action by tanks. Lastly a night operation by a Cavalry Squadron is followed thru in some detail.

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NIGHT ATTACKS

The Effect in World War II.

A military history monograph.

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NIGHT ATTACKS

The effect in World War II.

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Gentlemen, my subject for discussion for the next thirty minutes is on night attacks and their effect on operations in the war just completed. You will recall a statement during a conference on the tank battalion in the Tactics Department here at The Armored School that night attacks should be more the rule in the future and less the exception. With this fact in mind, I decided to find out to what extent night attacks were used in World War II. Were they extensively used or were there only a few tried? How successful were these attacks? Were they as dangerous to employ in combat as day attacks? These are some of the questions which you have wondered about and which I have sought the answer in this presentation.

The latest thought on the use of armor along with the infantry as a team in night work is shown in a Tactics Department training memorandum entitled "The Tank-Infantry coordination in the Armored Division":

"Night Attacks by the team should be stressed. If conditions permit, our forces should attack twenty-four hours a day: the necessary rest to be obtained by rotation of units. Rest is relative- food and sleep for the advancing soldier is victories. Once the enemy has been jolted off balance, everything is to be gained by maintaining relentless and unceasing pressure."

Another fact which was brought out in the conference noted above and which helped to influence me in a choice of subject for this monograph was a discussion of the element of surprise in the employment of the tank battalion in the armored division. "It was stated then that attacks failed due to the fact that the enemy could judge the time of attack and therefore they were not surprised, since there was no unexpected time of attack. Furthermore, it was an error to assume that if attacks were ^{VARIED} attacking time only during daylight hours, that the enemy would not be prepared. In other words, to gain surprise, attacks had to be launched, not only at first light, at noon, or during the last light of day, but also at various hours during darkness. The question then arose in my thoughts as to just how often were attacks varied enough in time during the twenty-four hours to gain surprise. This was quickly answered in a study of the After Action Report

1. "Tank-Infantry coordination in the Armored Division." n.d. , p.3.

of the 2nd Armored Division. During the month of August, 1944 in the "Cobra" operation, (south from Saint Lo), the following was noted as an example of time of attacks:²

010800	Combat Command A	(Just south of St. Lo)
040800	" " A	(Advanced 12 miles)
050800	" " A	(Toward VIRE)
060800	" " B	(" ")
080800	" " B	
100800	Task Force, CC A	(Thru 28th Infantry Division)
121100	Combat Command B	(Advanced 800 yards)
200800	" " A	(Little resistance)
200800	" " B	(" ")
230730	" " A	
240800	" " A	
240800	" " B	
300630	" " A	

Here is evidence of little variation in early morning attacks, which was found to be typical of many of our units. It can be seen that none of the thirteen examples were night attacks. It was found that night attacks occurred so infrequently that it would be a question of searching thru all After Action Reports to ascertain this fact. In the example listed above there may well have been some small scale night operations that were not recorded. It was found that there were very few night attacks of armor compared to daylight attacks. During this half hour I will cite various examples of night attacks and the reason for their launching. So far it may be said there is no set method in their execution, however from a review of various observer reports, the problems presented and the development of the night attack is noteworthy. I shall endeavor in the closing pages to offer an example of a night attack of a cavalry squadron in which I participated as assistant S-3 in Luxembourg in order to emphasize some factors not otherwise brought out.

Before a discussion of night operations is begun, it must be stated that no attempt has been made to compare the losses of night attacks with day attacks. Some commanders have cited instances where personnel losses were less than daylight, others stated that losses were threefold at night. After Action Reports and casualty lists may be able to give us this information.

²After Action Report, 2nd Armored Division, August, 1944, p.4., 141.

³Mackle and Brackett, Report of Observations in the ETO, 27 April, 1945, p.1.

However, a study of the results of the action south of St. Lo of the 2nd Armored Division did not reveal a breakdown of personnel losses into those occurring in day or night attacks.⁴

Let us next seek some definition of a night attack. It is not to be misconstrued with an operation at night wherein a column of foot troops or of vehicles travel over a road for some 30 miles without meeting enemy even though they are behind enemy lines. A night attack of any type must have the following characteristics: First, it must have a limited objective. The operations in the hedgerow country of Normandy, for example, will limit this distance to the objective to not over 300 yards.⁵ The same may be said for jungle warfare or operations in fog and smoke. Although the latter must be accomplished in a short time, the usual night attack is comparatively slow due to various inherent difficulties.

The second requirement for night attacks to be a success and insure less casualties is thorough, detailed but simple planning.⁶ The more detail in planning the execution of the attack, the less chance of losing units and the more probability that all arms will reach the objective.

In order to gain surprise, which is a very important feature when launching a night attack, secrecy becomes a third factor in making for success. The time of attack must be kept secret, especially if rehearsals are held in rear areas. The use of tanks in the attack usually defeats the purpose. The noise of approaching tanks may be overcome by employing artillery and mortars to drown out the tanks. This loss of secrecy by tanks may well be one of the reasons infantry employ night attacks with more frequency.⁷

A fourth factor which is necessary for success of the night attack is detailed day and night reconnaissance. This must be started during daylight and continued up to the time of attack in order to note any changes in enemy defenses for the night. Visits by all commanders down to tank crews to forward OPs for study of terrain, routes, and disposition of enemy forces are required.⁸

4. After Action Report, 2nd Armored Division, August, 1944, 141.

5. Robertson, Maj. Gen., Combat Operations # 29, 15 August, 1944, p. 1. Hq. 12th A. Gp.

6. Ibid, p. 1.

7. Starlings, P. N. Col., Current Questions regarding Infantry Operations in the MTO, 24 March, 1945, p. 1.

8. F. M. 17-33, Tank Battalion, December, 1944, pp 214-215.

Other factors which characterize night attacks include detailed orders, signals by controlling units for identification of personnel and vehicles, control of the direction of movement to the objective, and a detailed plan of reorganization on the objective or of withdrawal in the event the objective is not reached.⁹ Special training of all personnel for coordination and night vision is a prerequisite.

A review of some of the difficulties that are inherent to night operations are less of control of units, difficulty of movement, maintaining direction, and accuracy of fire. Our Field Manual 17-32, the "Tank Company", states:

"Tanks move with difficulty after dark, even over known terrain, and their fire is then less accurate. Exceptionally they may be used for night attacks. Their chief value when so employed lies in their morale effect upon enemy infantry and their shock action."¹⁰

Some of these difficulties may be overcome by controlling the direction of movement, that is by not changing the direction of the attack to the objective; by using the compass, by using tracers to show boundaries, by using white phosphorus star shells or searchlights to illuminate the target. Other controlling factors are the use of dismounted guides and markers in the approach march, moving forward under a time schedule, and by concentrations of artillery on the objective every few minutes.¹¹ Also aiding in overcoming difficulties is the issuing of complete, detailed, yet simple orders including clear and definite assembly areas, attack positions, line of departure, objective, time of attack, rate of advance, formation, route or zone markings and rally points for each subordinate unit.¹² Signals aid in overcoming difficulties such as prearranged lights for supporting fire control, flares to indicate objective reached, colored flashlights for controlling tank elements, and pyrotechnics. Signals must be simple, easy to recognize and easily remembered. Mutual troop identification may be helped by painting white markers on the back of turrets and by pasting white tape on the back of men's helmets.¹³

The mechanics of night attack when tanks and infantry work together

9. Ibid., p. 215.

10. F.M. 17-32, Tank Company, November, 1944, p. 145.

11. F.M. 17-33, Tank Battalion, December, 1944, p. 216.

12. Ibid., p. 217.

13. Ibid., p. 218.

increases the difficulty. One tank and one squad of infantry make up the basic team. The infantry in the approach march precede the tanks, ride on them, follow or flank the tanks. In the attack the infantrymen usually walk abreast of or behind the tanks. When terrain is bad, the tanks follow the infantry in support or flank the infantry, for example when passing thru woods. Tankers will engage the enemy machine gun fire, while the infantry takes cover. Firing of tracers will show the target to the friendly forces and the muzzle flash of enemy guns will be sufficient to bring fire from the tanks. ¹⁴

Thus it may be stated that to give a definition of night attacks, it was necessary to give the characteristics and difficulties. There are no set rules since all situations are different. However, I quote the following from our Field Service Regulations: " In spite of the inherent difficulties of the operation, night attacks have assumed major importance as employed by troops especially trained to overcome the difficulties of the operation and exploit its advantages." ¹⁵ You may wonder as to the fact that if night attacks are so difficult to conduct, especially with tanks, why is it that some commanders use them. It was noted that losses may or may not be increased. Let us see why night attacks were used in the war. Reasons for attacking at night are stated in the Field Service Regulations thus: " Night attacks are made to complete or exploit a success, to gain important terrain for further operations, to avoid heavy losses which would be incurred by attacks in daylight over open terrain, or to attract hostile reserves." ¹⁶ Another reason is given in a manual on " Far Eastern Warfare: " " An attacker, relatively weaker in supporting weapons and air support, may employ night attacks to meet the enemy on more equal terms of close combat." ¹⁷

Now, if we have a reason for attacking at night, what time at night are attacks made? There are some rules to be followed:

" An attack launched during the first hours of darkness may strike the enemy before he has had time to organize his position or his artillery support, and it anticipates possible enemy night attacks. If it continues from the day, it serves to maintain pressure on the enemy, prevents him from making a compact defense, and strikes at a time when enemy control is disorganized. An attack during the last hours of darkness may be used as a preliminary operation to a general attack at daybreak, giving the defender no time to reorganize before the daylight attack." ¹⁸

14. Ibid. p. 218.

15. "Night Combat", F.M. 100-5, June, 1944, p. 241.

16. Ibid. p. 242.

17. "Night Operations", Far Eastern Warfare, September, 1943, p. 128.

18. Ibid. p. 122.

Night attacks, as we have noted, are special operations. Its' character and difficulties in operation are numerous and unique. The training and deficiencies in our troops at the beginning of the war is indicated by the following observer reports. The first is from a report on the Tunisian front on 10 March, 1943:

" Until the present time the German and his allies have shown a decided dislike for night operations except for night infiltrations and patrols of infantry. Once he attacked with armor without adequate reconnaissance between 9 and 10 at night. This attack was smeared with decided loss to the enemy, with our troops (Ranger Battalion) highly successful, with high loss to the enemy and high morale to our troops. Reconnaissance must be accurate and intelligent and a map study must be made." ¹⁹

And again at SBEITLA in Tunis on April 30, 1943 another observer said:

" I observed a German tank raid at night which so panicked one unit, it fled leaving a large amount of material. Such is the result of inexperience and does not happen twice. But they might be eliminated if during training they had to dig fox holes and then have tanks overrun their positions at night, blasting away with cannon and machine guns. Infiltration by infantry and armor is bound to occur from time to time. Our troops must learn the best way to deal with it is to stick tight in their dug in positions. In discussing the need for night fighting training, it was said that simplicity is the greatest thing to strive for in night operations." ²⁰

A report on observations in the European Theater, August 1, 1943, by Maj. Gen.

Alvin Gillem stressed some factors in training for night operations:

" Armored elements must emphasize night operations in training. Armor can and does operate at night. Infantry must be trained to ride tanks forward at night. General Patton emphasized the following points in reference to night attacks in general.

1. Night attacks to be simple in plan with detailed methods of training.
2. Platoon, Company, and Battalion Commanders to control their units by use of different colored flashlights.
3. The use of tracer ammunition to indicate flanks and direction line." ²¹

A successful night attack is reported relatively early in the war by an observer in the Italian Campaign, when our forces were on the south bank of the Volturno. This attack was supported by armor and moreover was a river crossing: by infantry at night. The Division was held up for six days due to enemy small arms and automatic weapons covering the river front and more infantry with larger weapons in irrigation ditches behind. Artillery could not reach them. This made patrolling difficult and necessitated a night crossing. The infantry regiments crossed at 0200 using life rafts. One Tank Destroyer Company and one Tank Company waterproofed vehicles and forded the river early in the morning. Supporting fires from these vehicles during the night from the south bank were very successful. After crossing they were used to break up an enemy counter attack on the left flank." ²²

A report on observations in Sicily dated 24 October 1943 quotes General Patton again as stating: " Night operations has such an important place in war and is

19. Notes on Recent Operations on the Tunisian Front. Hq. A.G.F. April 30, 1943, p. 2

20. Observers Report. Hq. A.G.F. April 30, 1943, p. 8. Major Allerton Cushman.

21. Maj. Gen. Gillem, "Report of Observations", Hq. Armored Command, 1 Aug. 1943, p. 5.

22. Lt. Col. Bridgewater, "Observers Reports on Italian Campaign", Hq. A.G.F. 7 Feb. 44 p. 28.

so disliked by the German that we should specialize in it. Great improvements in night work, particularly in eyesight, are produced by practice." And on the African campaign on the 7th of October 1943: "The Germans frequently counterattack weakly held positions with small units shortly after dark, and even if successful would withdraw; our morning attack if contact with the enemy was lost, we would hit thin air." 25

Maj. Gen. H.H. Morris in observing in North Africa brought out other reasons for conducting night attacks as early as November 1943.

"Night attacks are popular with all commanders and have been extensively employed. They consist of occupying advance positions during darkness by going along trails in columns of twos or files and not attacking enemy positions ever previously reconnoitered terrain. The advantages are (1) exerts continuous pressure on the enemy. (2) Prevents the enemy from laying mine fields in his retreat. (3) The enemy evacuates his position more readily at night than day, reducing our casualties. (4) And lends continuity to the attack. The Germans intensely dislike these night operations. It is important that troops receive extensive training for them." 24

In the campaign in Italy, an observer reported as late as December and up to March, 1944 that units were not following accepted doctrine:

"The preparation for night attacks must be carefully made with complete reconnaissance and detailed planning. Ample time should be allowed to properly develop such plans and issue the necessary orders. But frequently this is not the case and higher headquarters if they are cognizant of the fact fails to heed them. Movement should be slow and deliberate, with men feeling their way with their hands in areas that are mined. Men should not fire their rifles in night attacks even when fired upon. Bayonets and hand grenades are far better weapons." 25

In the same report another observed; "Night operations are the rule. Troops unskilled in such operations suffered unduly until they found the answer to operating in darkness." 26

Not all attacks were successful due to various reasons. The following two examples of improper use of tanks at night is from a commanders narrative on the Italian Campaign:

"Night operations of tanks are hazardous and usually ineffective. At 160130 May 1944, Company D, 756 Tank Battalion was ordered to proceed to 'C' to gain and maintain contact with the enemy and report all information. 'C' is located on a precipitous hill mass. One road was difficult to travel by day and it was doubtful if tanks could get up the hill in daylight. The tanks went out and could report only antitank fire or mines hit. An intelligent enemy would reveal nothing else. Tanks are no substitute for horse cavalry or dismounted patrols. This operation lessened the efficiency for the next day." 27

"On 6 June 1944, Task Force Ellis was ordered to push on 'without pause!' They had just finished an engagement. The leading tank was hit by anti tank fire. If it burned it would mean other casualties. The personnel lost sleep, could not service their vehicles. The next day resulted in only a short advance." 27

25. Lt. Col. Bagart, Op. Cit. p. 16.

24. Morris, Report on Observers Trip to North Africa Theater, Hq. A.G.F. Nov. 43, p. 1.

25. Hakansen, Report of Observation, Hq. A.G.F. 13 Dec.-10 March 1944, p. 28.

26. Williams, Op. Cita p. 29.

27. Commanders narrative, Italian campaign, 11 May-4 June 1944, p. 2. Lt. Col. Reg

The Seventh U.S. Army was successful in the Vosges Mountains and gives credit to night attacks as part of the reasons:

" There were many night marches and attacks. Their success was due to observance of doctrine: limited objectives, reconnaissance and preparation. Successful night attacks pay rich dividends. Our troops are better night fighters than the Europeans. The American soldier seems to have inherited something from his Indian predecessor that makes him more skilled in night fighting, operating by stealth in the dark." 28

The Fifth U.S. Army in the Mediterranean Theater in current questions regarding infantry operations are varied in their findings. Of the four divisions cited only one was not in favor of night fighting except for limited objectives. Some reasons for their use was for surprise, less casualties and taking prominent terrain features which "could not be obtained except by night attack which demoralizes the enemy." Other commanders said "because: you have the enemy at a disadvantage as to where the main thrust is going to be made, render him unable to use his reserves, and for the element of surprise." The 88th Division commander said "Most of the fighting in this division, in its advance north, has been done at night and with good results." In answer to the question of the use of tanks, the G-3, 34th Division stated: "Tanks were used four times in this division in a night attack when we broke thru the Gothic Line but these were local attacks. Tanks could only go as far in the enemy lines as the path cleared for them thru the enemy mine fields by the advancing infantry. All of our night operations were with the 752d Tank Battalion." 29

A report of various observers in the Twelfth Army Group in Normandy, France shows the results of lessons learned in previous reports: Maj. Gen. Robertson, Commanding the 2nd Infantry Division commented: " I consider hedgerow terrain ideal for limited objective night operations....Our plans provide for supporting fires to include an artillery barrage behind the area to prevent the escape of the enemy....When we have conducted raids without such careful planning, we frequently have been repulsed." Reasons why night attacks were not made in the XIX U.S. Corps were first the necessity of conforming to the movements of other units, second, the high number of unseasoned replacements. The 29th Division discovered that the Germans, when being attacked, at dusk, withdrew their main defense about three hedgerows and by continuing pressure an appreciable gain would be made.. 30

28. Col. Steele, Observers Report, Hq. A.G.F., 18 Jan., 1945 p.1.
29. Col. Starlings, "Night Fighting" A.G.F. Observers Board, MTO, 24 March 1945 pp.1-3.
30. Robertson, "Night Operations" Combat Observations # 2, 18 Aug. 1944, pp.1-3.

A discussion of the forgoing reports has shown a steady increase in the use of the night attack. The lessons learned in previous work has shown improved technique. Let us next consider the night attacks as conducted by several Armored Divisions. After Action Reports disclosed specific attacks but only those where it was sure that the action started at night time are noted here. The first is the 1st Armored Divisions attacks toward ROME:

" During the night of 3-4 June (1944), several orders and counter orders were issued to both commands, reference to pushing the attack thru the night and sending a flying column into ROME.

At 0005B, CC"B" was ordered to proceed by all available routes to seize initial objectives and be prepared to continue the attack on Rome. The attack jumped off at 0345B, initially meeting no opposition except blown bridges and mines. At F.... units started receiving small arms fire and the main forces had to be employed in reducing an enemy strong point. At 1330 that afternoon the flying column was sent out.....

At 0200 CC"A" was ordered to continue the attack which jumped off at 0341B, moving thru "C" and highway Z. The first enemy resisted 7000 yards west of Castel Gondolfo in the form of enemy infantry and 3 MarkVI tanks. These tanks fought a delaying action all the way to ROME, reached at 1300B" ³¹

The 2nd Armored Division on the 23d of December, 1944 in moving from Belgium to Aachen, Germany had a meeting engagement at night: A task force from CC"A" at 0100 attacking south east toward "B", passed thru "G", and at 0215A an enemy column of the 2nd Panzer Division was encountered advancing north west on the same road. A moonlight battle ensued. T.F."A" immediately deployed its armor, infantry and Tank Destroyers off both sides of the road and ambushed the enemy column with the full fire power of the task force, throwing the enemy into confusion. Enemy casualties were enormous. At least 15 enemy vehicles were knocked out and firing by the light of burning vehicles, the remainder of the column was destroyed or dispersed. Task Force "A" then coiled up for the night and resumed the attack at 0630

On 6 January, 1945 Combat Command "A" attacked a limited objective in the assault of a village from 0330 to 0530. The task force after two hours of night fighting against an estimated battalion of enemy infantry and Mark V tanks halted the attack which was resumed at 0630.

Again on the 1st of March 1945 CC"B" launched an attack at 0150 to seize the Adolph Hitler bridge at UERDINGEN, capture it intact and gain a bridgehead. This command advanced three miles against small arms fire and anti tank guns during darkness. At daylight a stiff fight ensued. ³²

31. After Action Report , May- June 1944, p. 9. 21.

32. After Action Report, December 1944- March 1945, 141.

The 3rd Armored Division in cutting off the RUHR pocket from the south sent Task Force Kane from Paderborn to Lippstadt to meet the 2nd Armored Division. At 010300 April 1945 T.F.Kane moved out before first light meeting half hearted resistance from the many non German flak units. These units either fled or gave up and the two divisions met at 1520 that day.

The same task force attacked at 0400 at Bunderf where heavy fighting developed rapidly on 3 March 1945. Here however the enemy were caught asleep and his losses were heavy. At 0830 the town was cleared. Task Force Doan at the same time found the surprise of his night attack more complete. His force did not suffer a single infantry casualty and his infantry led the way into their town, which was secured at 0615. Doan waited to let Kane pass to attack the town "M" which was taken easy. The enemy which would have withdrawn to "M" were destroyed earlier.

Earlier the attack of Cologne was launched at 0400. All the Task forces attacked in their zones. Resistance on the right was scattered and light while on the left of the city it was more stubborn. The town was entered at 0730.

In the Remagen Bridgehead this division passed thru the 1st Infantry Division at 0400 on the 25th of March where immediate contact with the enemy was made. A 12 mile gain was made that day. ³³

The 4th Armored Division in the attack of Bastogne at 220600 December 1944, advanced northward toward Martelange in freezing temperature and ice on the roads, and reached it at 2100. Here the attack continued thru the night and at 23 0300 the town was cleared of the 5th Para Division. On the 28th of March, 1945 this Division crossed the Main River and met baseoka and small arms fire at 0300 but went 62 miles later against no resistance. ³⁴

The results of these examples of tank action prove the success of using night attacks. Some of the attacks were to exploit a success, prepare for attacks for the morning, and to gain surprise.

The 5th Armored Division found as early as August 1944 that it was not feasible to have armored columns to attack at night, since enemy infantry can get in close to tanks at night. In September it found that the enemy engaged more in night attacks in order to limit the effect of our artillery and fighter bombers and his knowledge of the terrain. ³⁵

The 6th Armored Division attacked in March at early morning hours. Some attacks developed at 0400 and 0430. It took six towns to the Rhine River one morning starting at 0400 and ending at 0800 and using a light tank company to clear enemy

33. After Action Report, March-April 1945, 9

34. After Action Report, March 1945, 25.

35. After Action Report, August, 1944-April 1945, 191R.

infantry from the towns. ^{36.}

A detailed account of an attack on a town on the Rear River by the Armored Section of the First Army was the method used by most of the units in Germany. Prior planning entailed tanks, infantry and tank destroyers to advance on the town under cover of artillery. Phase lines were used up to the town for control. Infantry rode the tanks up to the town. In actuality the artillery kept the enemy in the basements and lit up the objective. The infantry led the tanks into the town. This attack started at 2130 and the objective was taken at 0200. There were no casualties in the tanks but 7 infantry were casualties. 200 prisoners were taken in this action. The lessons learned were to approach as close to the town as possible before primary weapons opened up. Use tracer fire to line up targets. To identify tanks shoot small arms fire straight up. Don't light up any inflammable objects on the advance march since it will illuminate the column. Finally short bursts from tank machine guns hinders the enemy from zeroing in on the tanks. ³⁷

With all the foregoing actions it might be assumed that night attacks were always advantageous. Such is not the case. Before ordering tanks into action, it should be remembered that gunners cannot see thru unlighted sights. That was what the 191st Tank Battalion had to experience. However, the latest sights now adopted by tankers are lighted for night action. Another factor that has been corrected is the cutting down of the sheet of flame from tank exhausts. Tank noise is another factor that has been eliminated to a limited degree. The use of infantry with tanks at night aids to render the tankers' inherent blindness less aggravating. In recompense the tank is a morale factor to the infantry. ³⁸ Searchlights have been used to some degree in the ETO as artificial moonlight to the advantage of the attacking units. When placed in a defiladed position, on a night when there is no fog or mist, they emit light equal to three fourths moonlight. They must not silhouette the troops but must reflect light down from the clouds and blind the enemy. ³⁹ When the technique of fighting at night is improved even more, commanders will use the night to attack not merely because daylight attacks are too expensive or because the daylight attack failed to accomplish the mission. Night combat increases in impor-

^{36.} After Action Report, March 1945, 317.

^{37.} Love, A.S.Lt.Col. "Attack of A Town on the Rear River," Armored Section, Headquarters First U.S. Army. 17 April 1945, p.1.

^{38.} After Action Report, August, 1943-November, 1943, 227U.

^{39.} C&G.S.School, "Problem in Night Attack", 26 July 1945, C3-9.

tance in winter operations due to the long nights. The habitual use of night operations in winter campaigning is extremely probable and should be anticipated in the training period. If the enemy can be forced to abandon his shelters quickly while improperly clothed and to operate without these clothes and equipment for a considerable period left in his bivouac area, he will suffer numerous casualties from exposure and the morale and efficiency of his forces will be seriously impaired. ⁴⁰ This is what resulted to a limited degree to the Germans in the last example of a night attack in which I participated. This action took place in Luxembourg in January 1945, As verified from the After Action Reports of the 6th Cavalry Group and the 28th Cavalry Squadron in its report of the Ardennes Campaign of December 1944 to January 1945. (Note: See accompanying sketch.) The units in the 6th Cavalry Group in this month were Hq and Hq Troop, 6th Cav Gp; 6 Cavalry Recon Sq, mecs; 28 th Cavalry Sq, mecs; Company C, 602 Tank Destroyer Bn; Company B, 293d Engineer (C) Bn, and Battery C, 253 Field Artillery Bn.

" Early on the morning of the 22nd January the 6th Squadron pushed on dismounted, vehicles following, entered Eschweiler and sent patrols to the Clerf River, (Note: following the occupation of Wiltz, the 26 th Infantry Division and 90th Divisions had continued the attack to the NorthEast against very light opposition. First U.S. Army had reached St Vith) The right flank of III Corps was exposed to enemy forces remaining west of the Clerf River, accordingly the 6th Cavalry Group was assigned a zone on the right of the 26 Division, extending to the east to the Clerf River. At 211400A 28th Cavalry Squadron moved, mounted, from Wiltz, thru the 26 Division area, and passed thru the 6 th Cavalry Squadron at Kléinscheid in the evening. 6th Squadron outposted the high ground along the west bank of the Clerf from Drauffel to Wilwerwiltz. The 28th Squadron continued moving north, a slow, difficult movement. Passing thru Weicherdange with no enemy contact, the advance elements reached Eselborn in the hour before daylight and occupied the town. The Command Post entered the town immediately behind the combat element. With morning came the report of Civilians that the enemy now withdrawn to the east bank of the Clerf had been surprised, not expecting the Americans for another 36 hours, so rapid had been the movement. " ⁴¹

This is as the Group Headquarters reported the action. From this view point, this incident is covered in more detail, by the 28th Cavalry Squadron.

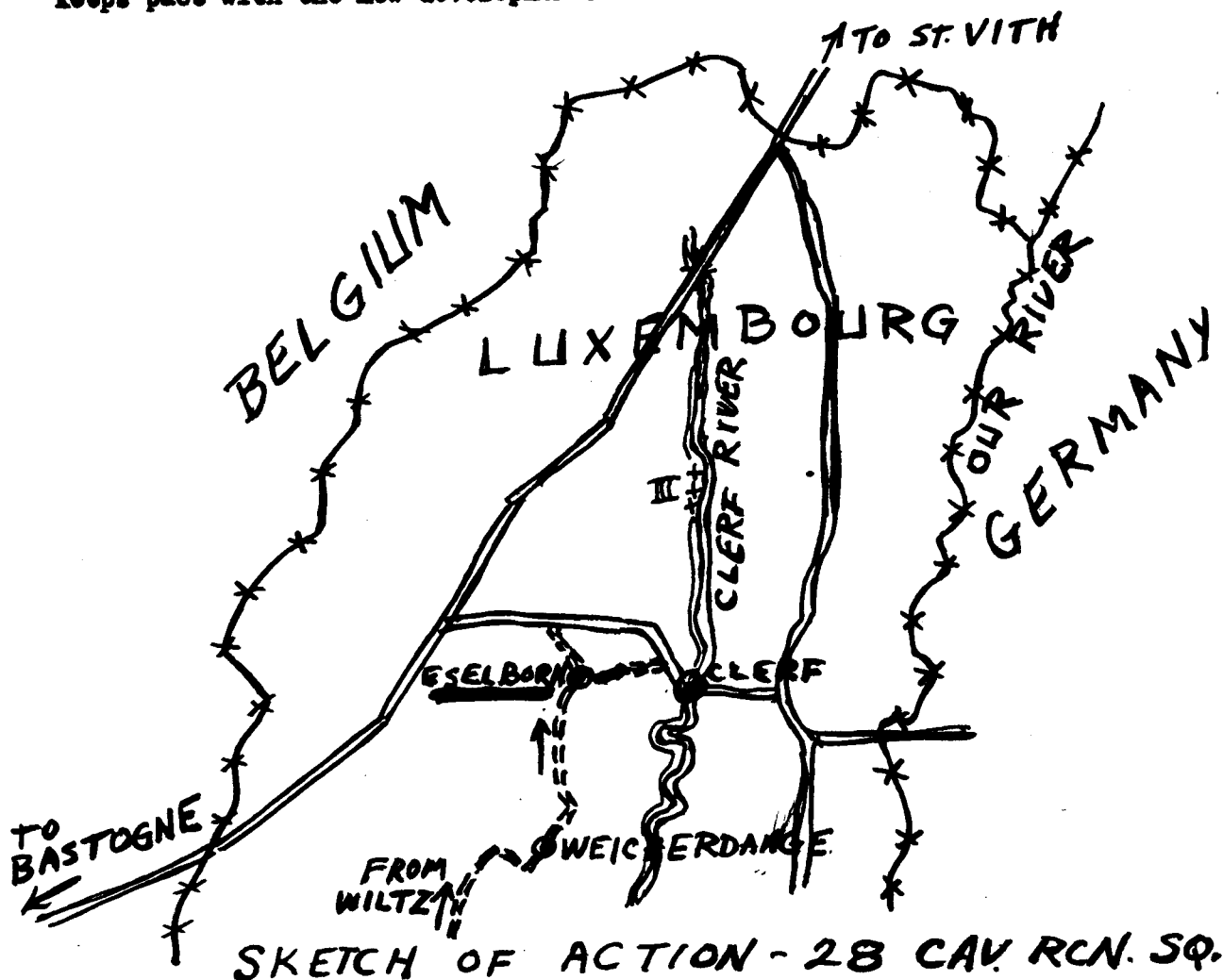
" At 221200A, January, the Squadron Commander received verbal orders to continue the attack to the north, pass thru elements of the 6th Cavalry and protect III Corps right flank until pinched out north of Eselborn. The Squadron started the movement north with Troop A leading followed by the Sq Advance C, P.; Troop C and 1 platoon of Company B, 293d Engineers attached. One platoon Company C, 602 TD Bn marched in rear of Troop A's Advance Guard plat. The roads to the north were not cleared of mines and consequently the column used the route from Wiseler to Darenbach. Two miles East of Darenbach an abatis was encountered. This was cleared and the Squadron arrived at Eschweiler at 1500 where orders were received to again continue the advance to the North. Troop A constructed a bridge one mile north of Eschweiler and the Squadron moved to Weicherdange where it encountered sniper fire at 221900. This town was cleared of snipers and the column continued until stopped by enemy mines

40. F.M. 70-15 Operations in Extreme Cold, November, 1944, p. 128.

41. After Action Report, December, 1944-January, 1945, 306.

one mile west of Eselborn at 222030A. Two M-8 Armored Cars of Troop A ran over mines and were put out of action. Troop A dismounted one platoon of men and advanced into Eselborn liberating the town at 230100. Light resistance was encountered in killing two of the enemy and taking two as prisoners. The mine fields were bypassed by the vehicles and the column entered the town at 0230 and immediately elements of Troop A and Troop C were ordered to outpost the town and to send patrols to the north and east. During the morning of 25 January Troops A and C continued to clear the enemy from the vicinity of Eselborn and Troop C captured an enemy outpost 250 yards east of the Squadron forward CP."

Gentlemen, you have been told of the characteristics of the night attack. You must have realized the difficulties that are inherent to these special operations. The progress in their use has shown a development in their technique and even though the Divisions cited here gave us few examples of night actions we must not forget their advantages. Remember, night attacks by field units become more successful as we learn the capabilities and limitations of the individual soldier to function in periods of darkness and as the technique of employment keeps pace with the new developments in instruments and equipment.⁴⁵



42. After Action Report December 1944-April 1945, 472.

43. Tactics Department The Armored School, "Night Operations" T-6175, 2 March, 1944.

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