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Title: Pathfinder teams of the 82nd Airborne Division in Operation "Market"

Author: Headquarters, European Theater of Operations (ETO), United States Army, War Department Observers Board

Abstract: AGF Report No. 450 – Pathfinder Teams of the 82nd Airborne Division in Operation "Market", dated 21 December 1944. Submitted by COL Harvey J. Jablonsky, Infantry. The following are comments from a report by 1LT G. Wilfred Jaubert, Pathfinder officer of the 82nd Airborne Division.

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✓ D 731.1 Pathfinder Teams of 82nd Abn Div
✓ .E 91 #450 Operation Market

HEADQUARTERS
EUROPEAN THEATER OF OPERATIONS
UNITED STATES ARMY
WAR DEPARTMENT OBSERVERS BOARD
APO 887

21 December 1944

SUBJECT: AGF Report No. 450-Pathfinder Teams of the 82nd Airborne Division in Operation "MARKET".

SUBMITTED BY: Colonel Harvey J. Jablonsky, Infantry.

The following comments are from a report by 1st Lt. G. Wilfred Jaubert, Pathfinder officer of the 82nd Airborne Division. Pathfinder teams are jumped on a particular object on the D.Z. such as a clump of trees, a building, or other features that has been previously picked out from serial photographs. In the following comments, any reference to a pin-point position refers to just such an exit point as described above.

1. Decision of Commanders.

a. Due to the fact that Operation "MARKET" was to take place during daylight hours it was decided that pathfinder personnel should be pin-pointed upon the drop zones preceding the main effort with only enough time to set into operation their navigational aids and place panel markings.

b. Final decision was that two teams, each consisting of one (1) officer and eleven (11) enlisted men be committed on DZ "O" twenty-five minutes prior to the arrival of the main effort on that DZ. Serials to jump on DZ "N" and DZ "T" were to fly over DZ "O", guide upon navigational and visual aids, and continue to their respective DZ's. These serials were to arrive in this order: Serial for DZ "N" at 1300, for DZ "O" at 1310, and for DZ "T" at 1328. Pathfinder drop-time was set for 1245.

c. In the first serial containing the 505th Parachute Infantry, the lead plane was to carry pathfinder personnel of that regiment. Their mission was to mark DZ "N" for the remaining serials and subsequent resupply drops.

d. Pathfinder personnel of the 325th Glider Infantry jumped with the 508th Parachute Infantry on DZ "T" to mark that LZ for glider landings.

e. Serials flying to all drop zones were dependent upon navigational aids established by pathfinders on DZ "O".

2. Personnel and Briefing.

a. All officers and enlisted men had previous combat experience but had not participated in a combat pathfinder drop prior to operation "MARKET".

- b. Preparation and briefing were in conjunction with the 101st A/B pathfinder personnel, conducted at IX TCC Pathfinder Group War Room.
- c. Rations, ammunition, smoke, panels, etc., had been predrawn and were stored in the area several weeks prior to assignment of the mission.
- d. Pilot-jumpmaster conferences were held as soon as DZ's were assigned and pin-points picked by jumpmasters and pilot-navigator teams.
- e. Regimental and division field orders were studied in conjunction with maps for the operation. Enlisted personnel of the base were restricted from time of receipt of first orders until return to aircraft from the mission.
- f. Each officer and NCO was issued a 1/25000 scale map of the DZ area. All personnel received copies of 1/100000 maps of area of operations. No Maps Were Marked.
- g. Air corps-airborne teams had been working together as such for approximately five months. Utmost confidence and coordination had been established. At all times the air corps pathfinder teams showed great willingness to cooperate with any suggestions presented by the airborne troops.

3. Equipment.

- a. Thompson submachine guns and M-1 rifles were carried. Each team carried six rifles and six machine guns. All men carried pistols, caliber .45 automatic, in addition to their primary weapons.
- b. Each man carried three D-ration bars and three K-rations.
- c. Each rifleman was supplied with two hundred rounds of ammunition. Men armed with the TSMG were supplied with 210 rounds of ammunition.
- d. All men carried trench knives and entrenching tools. First aid equipment included:
 - 6 ea, Packets, Sulfanilamide
 - 1 ea, Packet, Prcht First Aid
 - 1 ea, Packet, First Aid
 - 1 ea, Bottle, Halizone Tablets
- e. Two grenades, fragmentation and two grenades, smoke were carried by each man. Eight grenades, Gamin, were divided among the personnel of each stick.
- f. Due to the bulk of radar equipment some men requested permission to jump without reserve parachutes. Permission was granted but reserves were carried in aircraft for every man.

4. Uniform.

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a. Two piece cotton jump suits were worn as outer garment with woolen sweater underneath. Woolen O.D. shirts and trousers were worn underneath the jump suits for warmth.

b. Caps, wool knit, with visor removed, were worn under helmets.

5. Record of Events.

a. The final pathfinder briefing for aircrews and paratroops was held at 0830 17 September 1944 and immediately following all personnel proceeded to their assigned aircraft.

b. Team "1", composed of personnel from the 504th Parachute Infantry, commanded by 1st Lt. G.W. Jaubert, was assigned to aircraft #163. (1st Lt. L. E. Wood-Pilot).

c. Team "2" composed of personnel from the 504th Parachute Infantry, commanded by 1st Lt. Donald Carlock, was assigned to ship #706. (1st Lt. Mcintosh-Pilot).

d. Mission of teams "1" and "2" was to drop upon and mark DZ "O" for the main effort plus providing a check point for serials dropping on DZ's "N" and "T". Serials for DZ "N" and DZ "T" were to fly over DZ "O" and using radar navigational aids and panel markings for check points, and continue on to their own DZ's.

e. Pathfinder personnel were to drop on DZ "O" 15 minutes prior to the first of these serials and 25 minutes before their own main effort.

f. Teams took off at 1040 from Chalgrove Airdrome, circled, and followed a course generally east to the coast of France. Flying to the base of the British spearhead the ships turned north toward enemy held territory and upon crossing the plainly marked front lines speeded to 180 mph. Orange smoke was observed marking boundaries of friendly territory.

g. Friendly escort in the form of P-47's was abundant, giving the two ships all-around cover. Enemy anti-aircraft fire encountered was heavy and the friendly fighters lost no time in attacking enemy AA gun positions. A flak tower and flak wagon at Grave brought very heavy fire to bear upon the pathfinders as they jumped over the DZ but fighters neutralized the towers quickly. Immediately before dropping upon the DZ the P-47's were observed strafing the area heavily, completely disorganizing the enemy.

h. The pathfinder drop was effected at exactly 1245, as planned, and pinpointed upon the exact predetermined spot. Pilots slowed their ships to the lowest speed possible in order to give the pathfinder teams as little dispersion as was possible. Aircraft did not fly abreast but, with #163 in lead, flew over the DZ with #706 on the right wing. As the jumpmaster of the latter ship observed the first chute leave the lead craft, he jumped his own team. In this manner the teams landed side by side on the drop zone. Jump Altitude was 450 feet.

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i. Upon assembly, which was immediate due to the excellent drop given by the pilots, the panel "T" was put into position and all smoke dropped at the end of the leg. Due to the scarcity of smoke, it was decided that the senior team leader use the grenades at his discretion.

j. No immediate enemy resistance was encountered and team #1 experienced no difficulty in setting into operation their navigational aids. The panel markings and navigational aids were all in place within three minutes. Team "2" acted as local security since the team #1 had no casualties or enemy interference and needed no assistance.

k. The serial of the element to jump upon DZ "N" appeared at 1300. Twelve minutes later, at 1312, the first serial of the main effort landed upon DZ "O". The second and third serials arrived at 1315 and 1318 respectively. The main effort landed upon the drop zone in good order receiving some anti-aircraft fire. There was no hesitation in assembly and, forty-five minutes after the last serial jumped, the entire field was cleared. At 1328 the first serial of the element to jump on DZ "T" was observed over DZ "O".

l. Pathfinder personnel remained upon the drop zone until D+7, at which time they were relieved of their duties in that capacity. Resupply drops and glider landings are as follows:

D Plus 1

Resupply of smoke and CRN-4 batteries by 1st Lt. Burkhardt at 0830.

22 Gliders landed on DZ "O" at 1430.

Resupply by liberators flying at 100 ft. at 1600.

D Plus 2

Resupply by C-47's flying at 2000 feet. at 1530 hours.

D Plus 3

- 1645--45 planes at 2000 feet. Missed DZ.
- 1655--45 planes at 1000 feet. Dropped on DZ.
- 1712--90 planes at 600 feet. Dropped on DZ.
- 1725--45 planes at 500 feet. Dropped off DZ near Grave.
- 1735--45 planes at 500 feet. Dropped on DZ.
- 1745--45 planes at 500 feet. Dropped on DZ.

D Plus 4

- 1650--16 planes at 600 feet. Dropped on DZ.
- 1705--16 planes at 800 feet. Dropped on DZ.

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image(s) may be of
poor quality due to
the poor quality of
the **original**.

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turned to their parent organizations. No casualties were suffered by pathfinder personnel up to that date.

6. Summary.

a. Pathfinders were able to accomplish their mission in limited time due to excellent drops given by air corps personnel. Pilots slowed their ships to almost stalling speeds and jumped the airborne teams on pin-point positions.

b. Pathfinder teams should be composed only of men with previous combat experience.

* c. A map with the route of aircraft marked showing check points, plus time of arrival high-lighted, should be taped on the left of the jump door. In case of an emergency jump due to disablement of the aircraft, the jumpmaster would then be oriented as to his position on the ground.

d. Men should jump only such equipment as is needed for the pathfinder mission and the immediate combat operations. Extra food and clothing can always be obtained from the bodies of casualties or from supply drops.

e. Too much credit cannot be given the air corps pathfinder personnel for their continual willingness to cooperate in any way and for their excellent work in insuring a successful mission by dropping airborne pathfinders on the exact positions desired.

/s/ Harvey J. Jablonsky
HARVEY J. JABLONSKY
Colonel, Infantry
WD Observers Board.

* Route map was S.O.P. for all Pathfinder Teams during "Market" and "Nuts" (Bastogne). Check points are marked and ETA at check points are placed on the map in heavy print.

TCB

(Capt F. J. Brown)

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