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Report date: 28 February 1945

Title: My Experiences with Merrill's Marauders

Author: Weston, Logan E. CPT

Abstract: The following document was submitted by CPT Logan E.

Weston, who became an instructor at The Infantry School, Fort Benning, GA. He served as a 1st Lieutenant with the Merrill's Marauders in the CBI Theater and commanded the I and R Platoon of one of the regiments. The article was written 23

October 1944 while 1LT Weston was assigned to the

Headquarters Sixth Training Regiment, Infantry Replacement

Training Center, Fort McClellan, AL. Includes sketches.

His experiences are passed on to instructors at The Infantry School because of the valuable information contained in his

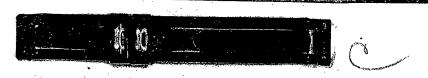
articles.

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Office of the ANTRY SCHOOL

THE INFANTRY SCHOOL Office of the Assistant Commandant

Fort Benning, Georgia 28 February 1945.

MENORANDUM :

The following articles were submitted by Captain Logan E. Weston, now an instructor at TIS. He served with Merril's Marauders in the CBI theater and commanded the I and R Platoon of one of the regiments. His experiences are passed on to instructors at TIS because of the valuable information contained in these articles. Chiefs of section are requested to give this memorandum wide circulation.

HEADQUARTERS SIXTH TRAINING REGIMENT Infantry Replacement Training Center Fort McCiellan, Alabama

23 October 1944

SVBJECT: Recommended Tactical Permations for Small Units in Jungle Warfare

TO : G-3, Sect. A.G.F., Army War College (ATTENTION: Colonel Bush)

Since being assigned to an Infantry Replacement Unit, I have concluded that although we have ideal training for front line and open terrain fighting, we are giving practically no instruction to the jungle soldier. I have yet to observe my first demonstration of tactics that will work in the jungle. May I suggest that a training film be produced? Others have thought of this idea, I know, but what is being done about it, or even sand table exercises?

A film on this topic could show tactics in operation that have preven themselves to be successful. It could show the cause and preventative for casualities, treatment for the patient, living off the land, etc.

We have the best fighting men and equipment in the world. We are in position now to arm these men with the benefit of past experience. Our IRTC Camps have sufficient members of jungle combat vets that could be used for demonstrating units, or for films production purposes. All of these men have ideas that they have seen worked out successfully in combate

Fellowing, you will find some sketches and remarks of my own that were discussed with you when I visited your office about a month ago. Enclosed also, are a few gleanings from Capt. Heinmiller's experience in jungle combat in the South West Pacific Area. Capt. James Hapkins who recently returned with me from North Burma, and who was re-assigned through Camp Meade, Md, would also be delighted to contribute from a medical point of view.

In introducing these tested suggestions to you, I shall leave the basic of the suggestions speak for themselves. In twenty-three battles and skirmishes, my platoon lost three men killed and four wounded. It was accredited with a known two hundred fifty four (254) and a probable additional four hundred sixty (460) members of enemy forces killed. The number of enemy wounded could not be estimated.

1. Sketch number 1 shows the SOP (Standing Operating Precedure) of the platoon formation in bivouse. This was our exclusive formation at eamp, in trail blocks, or in any situation requiring all

around security. It works very satisfactory for units from the size of a platoon on up. Our platoon consisted of four squads, but on numerous occasions, we also used the three squad formation shown in sketch number 1-B. Patrols smaller than a platoon in size can hide out rather than attempt to establish security by defensive methods.

The unit moving single file down a jungle trail will march directly into S.O.P. formation which results in the troops getting more rest and time for care of person and equipment. It also places each individual in position to fend an enemy attack from any direction. Finally, it secures the unit perimeter with a wide band of cross fire from both automatic weapons and riflemen. (See sketch #1 for distribution of fire.)

Before we began to use this formation, (SOP) the men were continually strung out along the trail for a long time while awaiting assignment of areas. During this time, they were vulnerable to enemy flank attack. They were also kept waiting while they could have been resting or cleaning their equipment - a great moral factor is involved, also the physical and mental factors must be considered.

This was the difficulty encountered when the unit was using the circular perimeter. The reason being that there was only one point to build from, instead of the suggested four. This one point being the forward equal from which the perimeter must extend on both the right and left flanks.

- 2. The most satisfactory platoon formation on the trail is to have two scouts out. They are followed by the platoon leader. Next in line is the shock group of three men, then the first squad leader followed by the rest of his squad. Following the first squad comes personnel of Platoon Headquarters, then second, third, and fourth squads respectively. The Platoon Sergeant usually remains near the rear of the Platoon. The Platoon Guide is with Platoon Headquarters Personnel. Sketch number two shows the disposition of the Platoon members and the wespons carried by each.
- 3. If the unit is advancing down a trail and the scouts contact the enemy, the platoon moves into positions shown in sketch #3. In this case, the Platoon Guide directs the respective squads to their desination. He merely points in the direction they are to go, and orders the scouts to proceed 40 yards then stop. (Distance will vary in accordance with terrain festures and foliage thickness). When the scouts halt, the squad will build a wedge on their podtion.

The Platoon Leader gets an estimate of the situation and by the time he returns to the Platoon C.P. with his decision, the Squad Leaders have sheeked their units, coordinated their lanes, established their sectors, and are at the platoon C.P. ready to receive necessary information. (Bivouse orders, plans for action, etc.). This method is quick and gives the unit a perimeter protection within five or ten minutes after opposition has been encountered. The Platoon is thus prepared for a flank or counter-attack launched by the enemy.

- 4. If the Platoon Leader has decided to use a squad as a maneuvering force to hit the enemy flank, he can take the squad covering the rear, and cross fire the two flank automatic weapons to give rear guard protection. He may need a rifleman or two to fill the gap. These men can be taken from Platoon Headquarters. See sketch #4.
- 5. If the plateen is to be withdrawn from contact with the enemy, or if it is to withdraw in delaying action, this can be done by using two squads as a team and leap-frogging the teams backward.

 (Sketch #5) Our operations proved the enemy would attempt to flame

we would william was hit. If he flanked as in "A", Sketch #5, we would william squads #5 and #4. If he flanked as in "B", we pulled squads #2 and #5. If it were a double envelopment move, we would build up a line with squad #5 and withdraw the men (by two men teams) back through the third squad, then reorganize and lampfreg the sections back as shown in sketch #5-B. After squads #1 and #2 built up the S.O.P. block, then the third squad would withdraw through them and that squad with the fourth, would set up the next displacement.

6. If the unit had received orders to establish a trail block, the enemy should be permitted to advance to point "A" (Sketch #6). The squad leader should be with his M.A.R. team, and plan to use the element of suprise. The initial burst from the automatic weapon should be a signal for all men on line C and D (Sketch #6) to commonce firing.

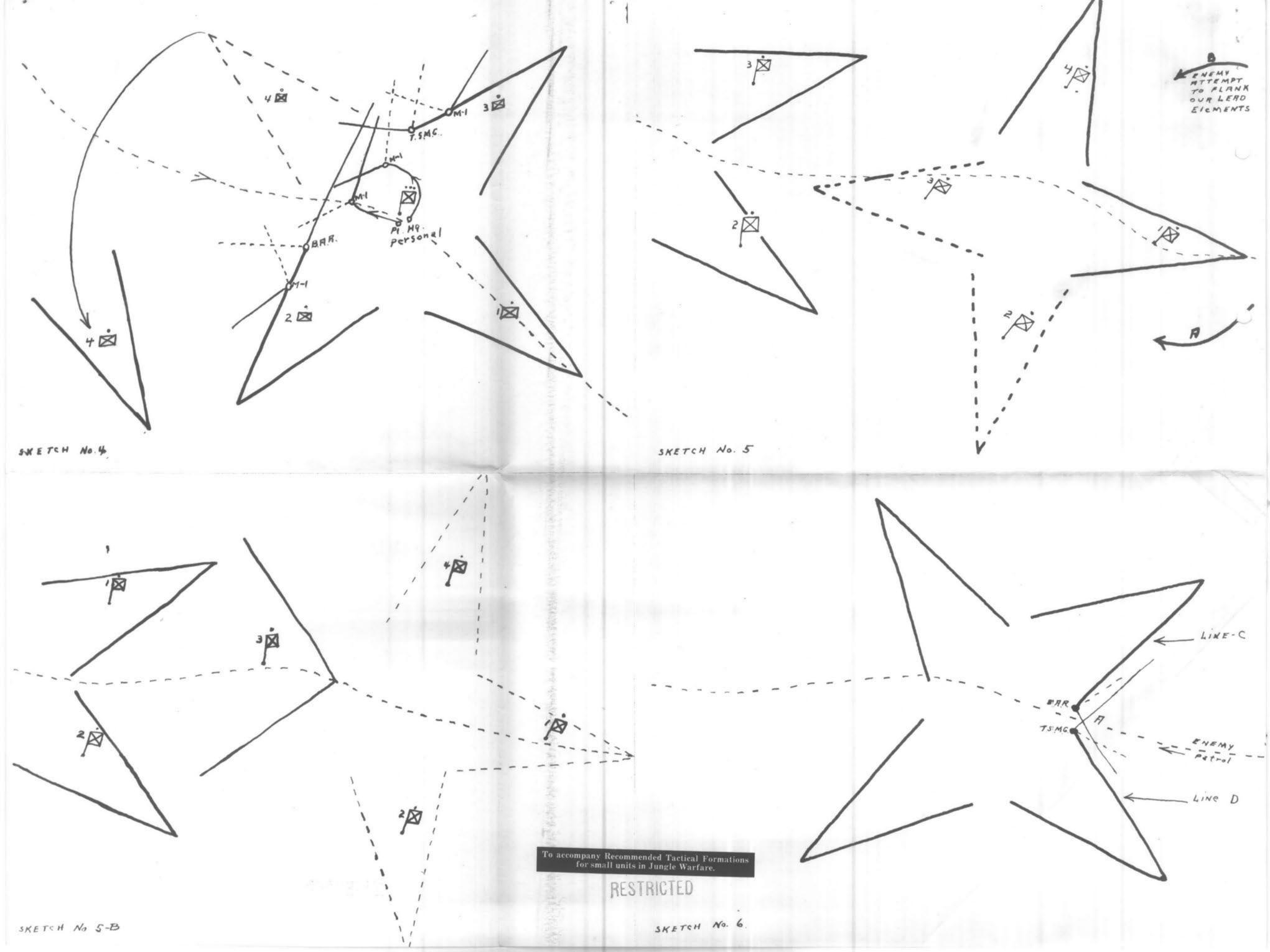
All jungle fighters to whom I have spoken agree that it is typical of the enemy to lawnch a counter-attack or flank movement, existly as possible after they have been hit. This necessitates are all around security being quickly established. In over three menths of operations behind enemy lines in Burma, we also found that the enemy would invariably start a flank movement immediately upon running into one of our blocks.

For that reason, regardless of whether we are on the offensive or defensive, the fact remains that the disposition of our unit to give all around security is immediately essential when contact is made.

In case of a unit larger than a platoon, for example, a company; the unit could use the same type of a perimeter, have platoon wedges in place of equad wedges. This of course would require a more careful designation of fire lance and disposition of men.

Thanking you for your consideration, I remain ready to assist in any way possible.

LOGAN E. WESTON, 0-1705021 1st Lt., Infantry.



I. and R. Plateon Ingegement at Valaims

In the Walabum battle, Hukawag Valley, North Burma, the following actions occurred on March 5, 4, and 5, 1944.

My I. and R. (Intelligence and Reconnaissance) Platoon was moving westward on the Mwangkang trail, toward our objective of establishing a road block at Valabum. The rest of the battalion was about four (4) hours behind my platoon. The mission was to cut the only supply route of the enemy which supplied their forces engaged against the Chinese several miles to our north.

We met apposition at Legan Ga, and had only driven the enemy a short distance when the rest of the battalion caught up to us. The Battalien C.O. ordered another platoon to go through mine and take the offensive down the trail toward our objective. They preceded down the south side of the river to position at about "A" on sketch X-2, where they were halted by darkness.

My plateon, after being relieved, was ordered to cross the river and protect the right flank of the column which stayed on the south trail.

Nightfall of March 3 found my platoon dug in at position shown on Overlay K-1. We met very little resistance that day. Morning of March 4 was very foggy and wet. We could hear the advance platoen to our coutheast, still driving vestward. Maving slightly commanding ground, being dug in and in a position from which we could fire both up and down stream at any enemy attempt to cross, I decided to remain in position until the rest of the Battalion paralleled us.

The plateen was ordered to improve positions. At 6720 on March 4. An enemy patrol came down trail #1 and hit our automatic weapon erosefire (one auto. weapon on point and one on each flank of each squad wedge). We accounted for their lead ten men. The rust of the hostile unit halted, and twenty minutes later, made an attack at arrow #2. This attack was repulsed with crossfire from the right half of Squad #1 and the left half of Squad #2. Just prior to the second attack, Pfc. Peter Leightner of the second squad was about fifteen yards out in front of his position gathering materials to camouflage his fexhele near the left flank of Squad #2. A single shot from an enemy rifle hit him in the lower abdomen and penetrated from left to right side of the body. His teammate still back at the position could not see the enemy. This shows the importance of team members working within five yards of one another. The wounded man was dragged back to the center of the perimeter where the aid man, working under cover provided by a depression in the ground, administated merphine and sulfa drugs and then bandaged the wounds.

The enemy, after being repulsed at #2 arrow, reorganized and about thirty minutes later hit us again at #3. About half an hour later, they hit us in force at #4.

As they continued to search for a weak place, they left a thin line of riflemen in the area of their previous attempts.

When they hit us at #4, we could hear reinforcements coming in on trail #1. They apparently planned to surround us in force, then close in on our perimeter. As the reinforcements arrived, we were subjected to a heavy barrage of mortar fire. A tree burst from this shelling cent chrapmel out ever the third squad, wounding Sergeant Lionel Paquette mertally (head wound) and cutting a vein in the wrist of Pfc. Tom Farren. These men were given immediate first aid treatment and placed in covered positions within the perimeter.

After attack No. 4 was repulsed, we contacted the Battalion mertar erow by walkie-talkie and zeroed them in at arrow #1. After sensing there was accurate, we ordered zone fire and directed it in an are around our perimeter, traversing to the right. This relieved the pressure, and lightened the attack at #5.

By this time, the forward elements of the Battalion had reached the objective at perimeter B on Overlay X-1 and we received orders to withdraw to the south side of the river and join our unit.

The enemy at arrow #1 and #5 had our south flank covered by fire, and we were unable to withdraw. We called for a squad from the Battalion to build up a skirmish line on the south bank of the river from where they could sever our withdrawal. While awaiting their arrival, we improvised litters for the two litter patients and planned our retreat.

After the covering force took their positions, they opened fire on the enemy seen at arrows #1 and #5, and kept the banks clear while my men infiltrated scross the stream. When we reached the far bank, we reinforced the holding squad there. As our unit withdraw, the enemy followed us right through our vacated perimeter. The withdrawal was made under cover of mortar smake, which was not completely deceptive to the foc. The enemy attempted to cross the river on about a 150-yard front, but ran into heavy small arms fire from the skirmish line on the south bank, and were repulsed.

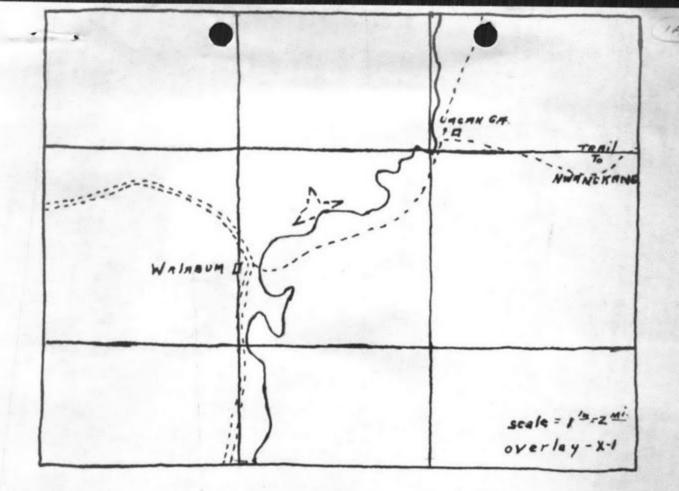
The wounded were taken to the Battalion Aid Station, where they received further treatment.

After the enemy's attempt to hit the Battalion right flank was unsuccessful they withdrew, and we, with mission accomplished, rejoined the Battalion at perimeter B.

Had Leightner been more careful about going out in front of the perimeter, he may not have been a casualty. Nothing could be done about the tree burst which inflicted the other two ensualties.

Sergeant Paquette had lost his glasses on the march down the Ledo road several weeks before, and had been unable to have them replaced. While away from the platoon, in an attempt to get a refit of glasses, he lost his helmet. He rejoined the platoon when it was impossible to supply him with another belief. He may not have been a casualty providing he had been properly armored. The helmet definitely saved the lives of at least eight men in that platoon during numerous engagements. These men, with one exception, were all saved from flat trajectory fire at point blank range.

LOGAR E. WESTON 1st Lt., Infantry





T WALABUM RESIRCIED

ACTION OF INTELLIGENCE AND RECONNAISSANCE PLATOON IN BURMA FROM 24 MARCH UNTIL 28 MARCH 1944

On the morning of 24 March, my plateon left it's bivouse at Mhpum, and continued southward to Auche, then to Manpin. We reached Manpin at dark on 24 March, and established our normal perimeter. At dawn on 25th March after a quick reconnaissance we established our security as indicated in sketch #1, accomping this report. We were dug in and ready for action by 0730. At approximately 1030 the combat team (crange) arrived, and by 1230 I had received orders to proceed to Poakum and establish a block there. Our positions were occupied by mean of the Orange combat team, and only I & R plateon advanced to Poakum. We reached our objective unopposed, and were dug in and ready for action by 1600 on 25 March.

Soon as we reached Poakum at about 1300, I saw the need of mortars and machine guns, so radiced back to the Orange Combat Team for a section of each. These weapons arrived and our block was completely established by 1700, on March 25th.

About 1900 of the same date, Lt. Smith arrived with a 23 man platoon. He was enroute to pass us and establish a block on the Warong Tathum trail at Warong. Being overcome by darkness, he decided to spend the evening with me, and continue on the next morning. His men were placed around the perimeter with my men, and we used double sentry system that night. About 0715 on 26 March, Lt. Smith pulled out and advanced to Warong.

At 1040 on 26 March, the enemy seming north on the Kamaing Mindukawn trail hit us at Poakum. This was a light force of estimated platoon strength. They tried a flanking infiltration play, but were soon discouraged, so withdrew back down the Kamaing trail. At about 1130, one unit hit our defense at the same place on the Kamaing trail, and another thrust was made at our west flank (sketch 2). This attack was made by unit of commany strength and laster until 1300. After our mortar fire disrupted their plans, and evidently caused heavy casualties, they retired down the Kamaing trail. At 1400 the third attack hit us with a thrust at our south, one from the west and one from the east. All hit us at about the same time, and we cetimated a battalion opposing us. Terrain limited their maneuvers, and when we realized they were out to get us, we gave them everything we could offer. They withdrew the attack at about 1420 and we began preparing to withdraw up the Warong trail with hopes of getting past their flanking movements before they completely currounded us. All preparations being made, we hit the enemy's concentration point with heavy mortar fire, then pulled out. Our radio was knocked out of action from effects of the first attack, so we were unable to contact the Orange Combat team. We withdrew from Poakum at about 1520, and a short while later, heard the Nips shooting up our vacated area in an apparent Banzai attack. They may have been feeled into thinking that we were still there by the occasional explosion of the fused T.N.T. charges we had left and ignited at time of departure.

We arrived at Warong at about 1800 and coordinated our forces with Smith's platoon. Smith had 3 (six men) outposts at positions and on sketch \$3. We distributed my men in order to reinforce his blocks, and ordered them to dig in. The outfit was settled for the night by 1915. After issuing those orders I took three men on a reconnaissance mission. We discovered that Smith had mistaken trail @ (which was not marked on map) for the Auche-Tatbum trail, and had placed his outposts at the wrong junction. His outpost at was also in wrong location, because that trail led only to a spring, and not to Tatbum. At 0700 on 27 March, I had shifted the men from to junction and took my men from (leaving only Smith's men there) placing them at A small patrol was then sent down the Tatbum trail. The mortars were set up to support our blocks in all directions. The light machine gun section was split up and each gun crossed fire with a B.A.R. team.

Expecting the enemy to follow us from Peakum, I remained in the area of our block on that trail. At about 9730 I dispatched a mounted messenger to contact Merrill's Meadquarters now at Mapum, and inform them of our actions, and need of ammunition. At 1000 the messenger returned with information that a force of 100, fellowed by 200, fellowed by 300 Japs were on the way north in the Tathum trail. At 1010 my Tathum patrol returned saying that they had contacted the Japs about a mile out. They observed pack animals with the hostile unit which appeared to be quite large in size. Expecting then that my Tathum block would get hit, I want to that area, and ordered Saith to take over if anything happened on the Poakum trail.

At 1020 the enemy hit us at our block on the Tathum trail. The firelight lasted for about ten minutes, then the enemy withdraw a short distance, and we could hear him organizing for an attack. At 1025, the Japs coming up from the Peakum trail hit our block there; then, after a short fight, also withdraw for organization. It was soon discovered that both enemy forces were spreading out in a double envelopment, and trying to infiltrate through sur defenses. The enemy continued to work around our block feeling the defense out until their organized attacks hit us simultaneously from both the Peakum and Tathum trails. This attack was repulsed by about 1800. The enemy still remained active on our East, South, west and Northwest. Their tactics were strictly infiltration the, and not in force at any particular place. It appeared that by 1800, the right flank of the Peakum force had contacted the left flank of the Peakum force had contacted the left flank of the Peakum force had contacted the left flank of the Peakum force had shifted a large force (estimated company) into position along the North trail leading to Auche.

When it became evident that our only route out was being out, and that the enemy would bypase our block, we issued the order to withdraw up the Auche trail. Before pulling out of position, we gave the area to our Southwest a barrage of mortar fire, in anticipation of delaying their attack. We also covered the area to our Northwest with mortar and machine fire, in andeavoring to slow up the enemy attempt to our our route of withdrawal. Plans were made, and orders were issued requesting the withdrawal. We divided the unit into two teams, and began displacing teams. Northward at about 1630. The enemy kept hammering us back by hitting us from the south, as we withdraw Morthward. We held with one team until the hostile activity on our West flank endangered the position, then would withdraw the endangered team through the other team which had received sufficient time to prepare for their stand. Teams displaced Northward in the leapfreg tastics until about 1800 at which time contact with the enemy was broken. And we withdraw to Auche where we went into position as shown in sketch #4. We estimated a battalion of enemy hit us from the Tathum trail, and about the dime size forms from Poaksm. We later discovered that they did have some artillery with them. Reaching Auche at about 1900 on 27 March, we established our security, but were not molested that night.

On early morning of 28 Narch, the Japs were discovered attempting to feel out our position. They have seed our lines until about ten thirty, then apparently withdrew. My small patrol advanced south on the Varong trail, and discovered that the Japs had established an outpost about 600 yards to our south.

At about 1000, our emergency supply drop of rations and ammunition reached us and was intersepted at Auche. Headquarters at Nhpum was notified that we were in position at Auche and were making our last stand there. We asked for help to be sent as soon as possible.

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The enemy gave us little trouble that day, but we anticipated a heavy attack would hit us. Only occasional skirmishes took place between clashing patrols throughout the day. About 1800 of 28 March, Lt. Wilson from A Battalian reached us with his platoon, and we reinforced our perimeter for the night. B and C Battalians reached us about 1930, passed through our defense.

At daybreak 29 March, Wilson extended our perimeter farther south by placing his platoon along the Warong trail. About 6750, the enemy began to pound our block with artillery, fired from the vicinity of Warong. Enemy hit us from after with his infantry, and we immediately received orders to delay action up the trail leading Northward to Whpum.

My plateon was composed of 52 men for this entire action. We had sixteen weapons men attached, making a total of 68 men, then when we joined Smith at Wareng, the combined forces totaled 91 men. We had no essualties, (except minor wounds on animals) but enemy lesses were quite severe. It was impossible to count their lesses, due to the retrograde type of action we fought. About 75% of our mortar fire was definitely effective, and all small arms fire was made to count. We used up approximately two units of fire in this action.

After evacuating Auche, we withdrew up the Nhpum trail, and finally passed through B Battalion.

Motes in my letter 23 October 1944 on the subject "Recommended Tastisal Formation For Small Units," will inform you about the action that took place for the next two weeks.

By order of the Assistant Commandant:

PHILIP H. KROM, Colonel, Infantry, Secretary.

Offensive at Minus

B Battalion, being completely surrounded at Mhpum, called for help. On 1 April 1944, G Battalion at airstrip (see Area "G" of Overlay X-3) received orders to drive south on the Mhpum trail and release B Battalion. By that time, the enemy had organized his positions along the trail clear to the north end of contour lines on enlargement of Area C of Overlay X-3.

On the morning of April 3, the Intelligence and Reconnaissance plateon was ordered to spearhead the drive. The trail had to opened because it was the only possible route of withdrawal for B Battalion.

Beginning at the 150-ft. contour line, my platoon advanced through the leading elements, and by using our two wedges abreast, we pushed to the position shown at arrow, April 3rd. In this action we shuttled squad wedges forward about fifteen yards at a time and worked forward by fire and movement. We reinforced the assault squads with the fourth squad and kept the third squad in position to guard our right rear, also to act as a reserve. The rest of the Sattalian was strung out on the trail and kept right up to our platoon, thus protecting the rear and left rear.

By evening of April 4 we had advanced to position at arrow showing said date. The enemy were dug in on both sides of the trail with heavy weapons. They never extended over sixty yards to either flank, so by using this formation, my platoon was able to deliver crossfire on their installations. The heatile fire delivered on us from the enemy flanks was considered minor and easily dispensed with.

The enemy had high commanding ground to our immediate front, and were well dug in. We attempted to soften them up by use of artillery and mortar fire; also, with air support. Every time the barrage lifted, the two assault squads would attempt to gain ground only to be driven back to the previous position. In seven attempts made that day, I lost three men wounded and one killed. The wounded, Pfo's Lappier and Avery, were both Browning automatic riflemen. They both reserved hits in the left shoulder from enemy sniper fire. Avery was hit while attempting to dig in before the unit was driven back to the old positions, and Lappier disclosed his position when he fired at an enemy machine gun mest. Neither of these casualties could be avoided as the enemy were so high above us. Also in this action, Corporal Gomes (Flatoon Aid man) received a head wound from a mortar tree burst. He was way back behind the front lines by fifty yards when hit. His helmet saved him from certain death, though his skyll was severly fractured.

Pro Carrigan was killed when he advanced to about six yards from a well camouflaged hostile machine gun emplacement. His death was also probably unavoidable. He might have been more observant, but later investigation proved that the position could not be detected until one advanced to a line parallel with the enemy gum. There also is the possibility that he was overconfident in the effects of the mortar barrage and became eareless in using what little ground cover the terrain offered.

The day of April 5 was without gain of terrain. Early morning of April 6, we laid a rolling barrage on the enemy starting it about thirty yards in front of our squad points. As the barrage rolled back, we advanced close behind it in mopping up operations, and thus succeeded in securing the enemy positions on the high knell. The enemy attempted to return after the barrage, but were met by fire coming from our men who had occupied their foxholes.

On April 7, we again were halted by reinforced enemy fire. The terrain here afforded possibility of a flank movement so we relled our platoon as described in Annex "A".

By evening of April 7 we were in position as shown by arrow marked same date on enlargement of Area 6, Overlay X-3. We were relieved here by another platoen on the merning of April 8. During our five days of effensive combat up a steep mountain trail, the platoen lost four men against an estimated company of enemy forces killed. The other platoens which used the eld straight skirmish line on their four days of spearhead fighting, lost about thirteen men killed and several wounded. They met the same opposition as we did, ever the same type of terrain, and advanced by fire and mevement. All of their drive was frontal, however, where our formation gave us the benefit of as much flanking fire as possible.

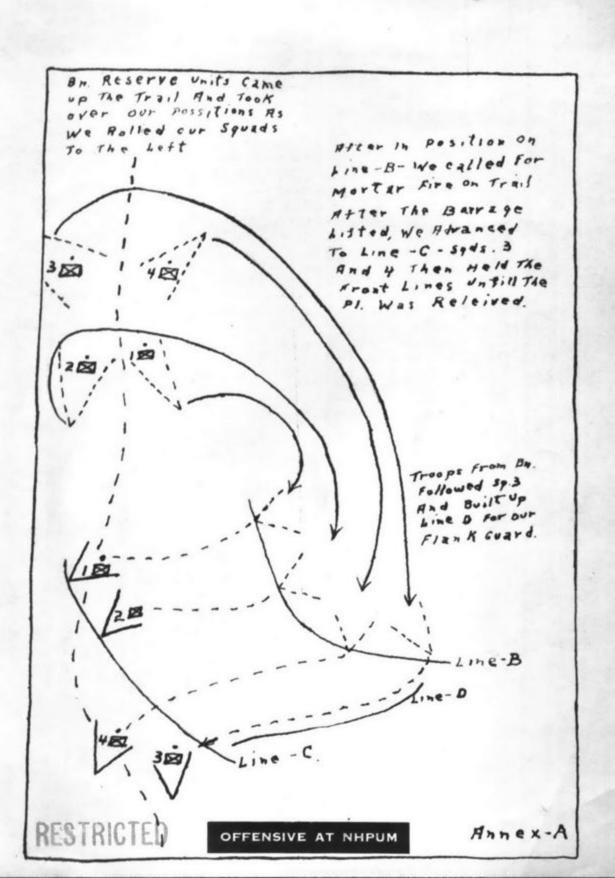
My platoon had gained two of the four miles of trail which we had to take in order to reach our objective. We required five days to take what the other unit had recovered in four. We did so, however, at a less of considerably less men.

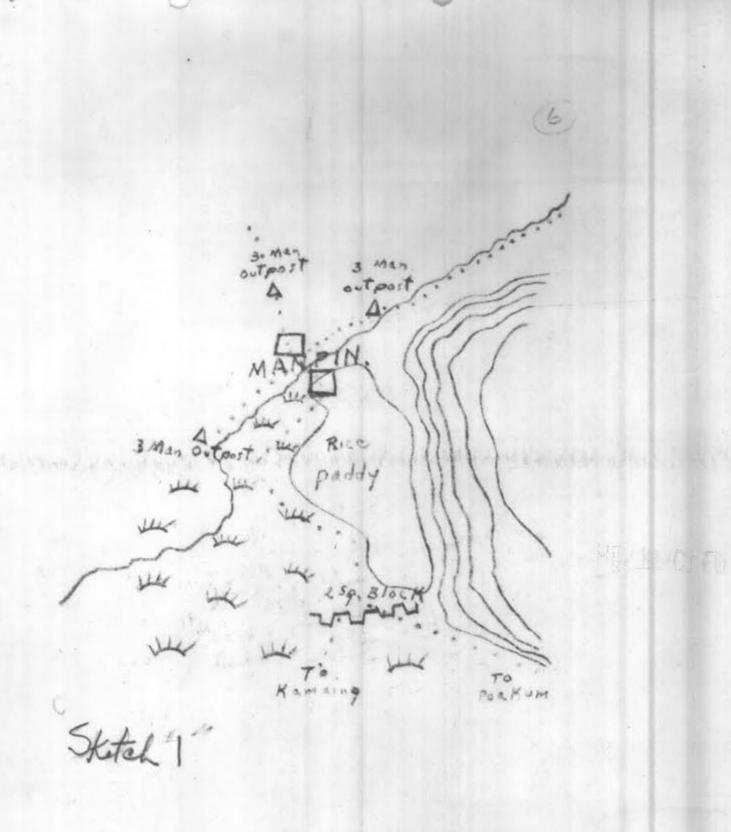
Except for numerous meeting engagements and minor skirmishes, this terminates the actions of the plate on in the Mogaun and Hubsang Valleys of North Burma. Later, the outfit used the same kind of tactics down the Myitkyina Valley with similar results.

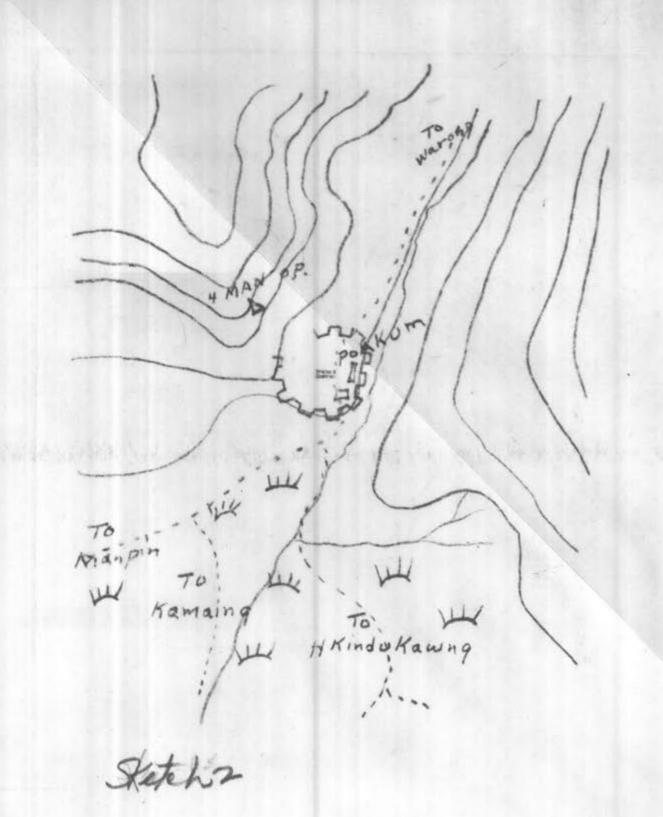
The engagements mentioned reveal how satisfactory the resumended formation of the platoon is in all kinds of jungle wayfare, in all kinds of terrain, under all conditions. We have showed defensive, offensive, delaying action, trail blocks, and bivouse security plus the all-important method of giving quick all-around security when contact is made.

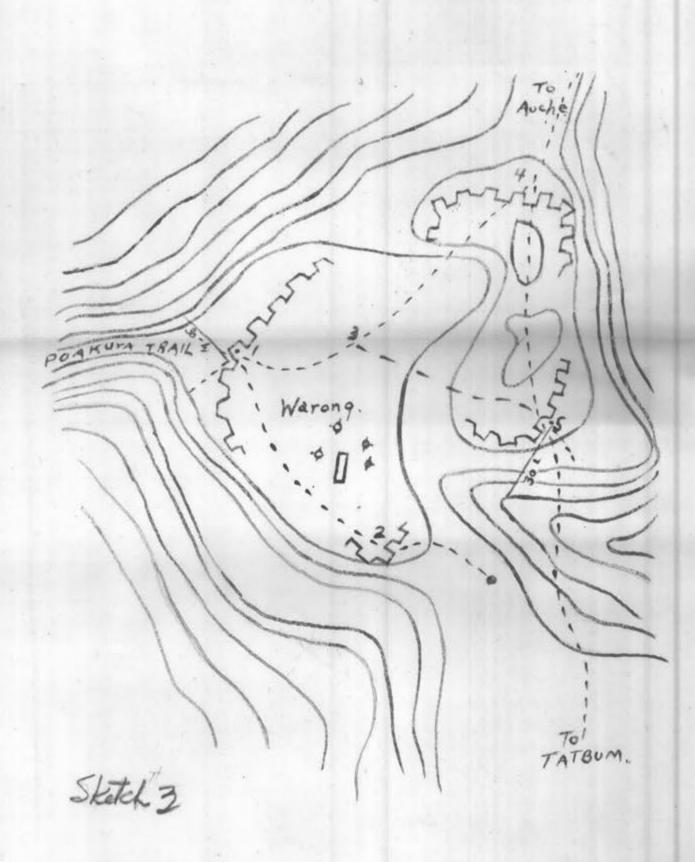
LOGAN E. WESTON 1st Lt., Intantry

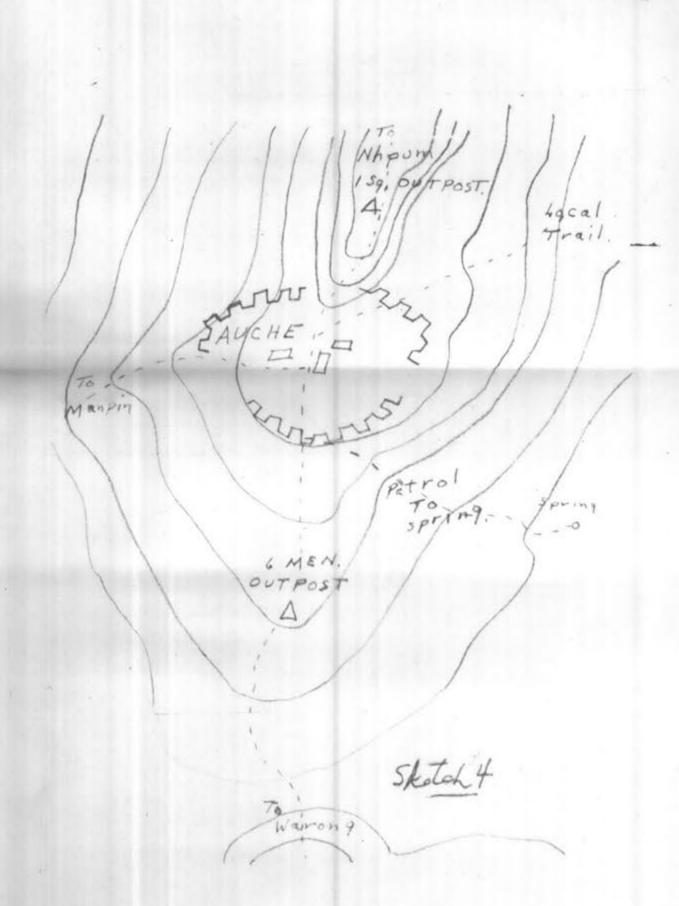
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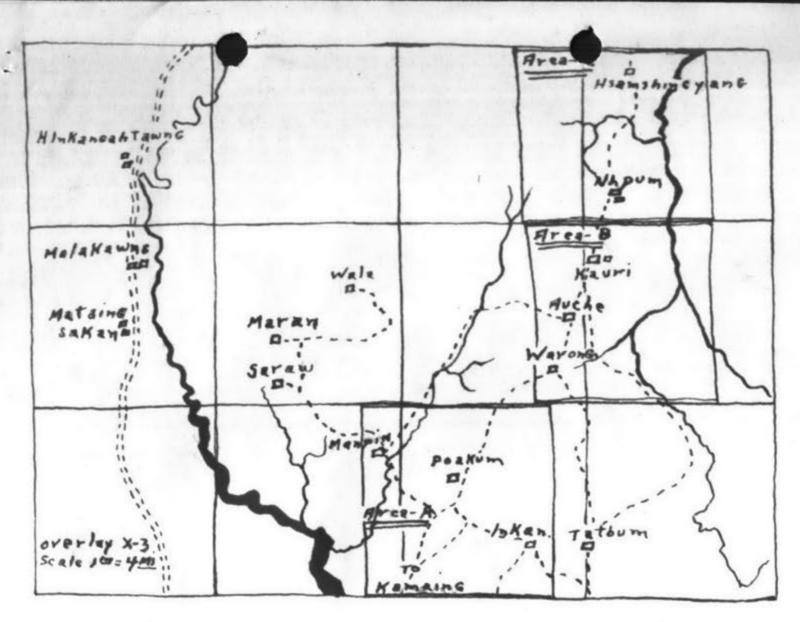


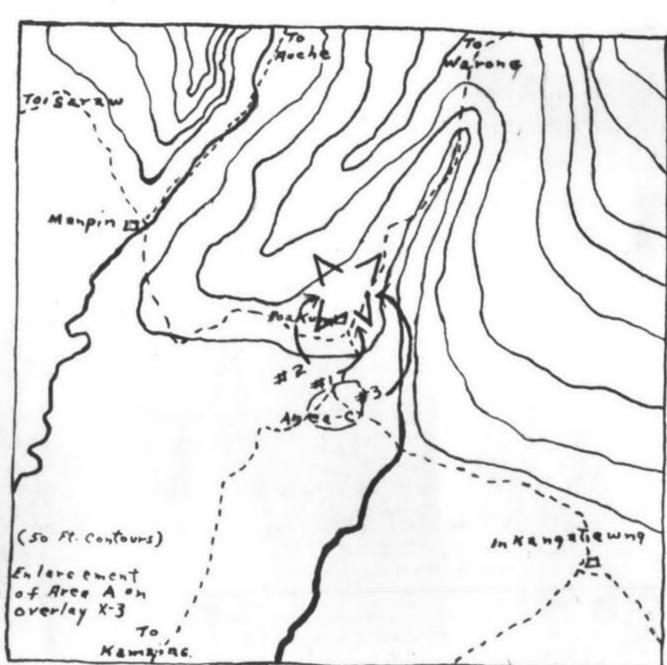






I & R PLATOON ENGAGEMENT AT POAKUM, WARONG, AND AUCHE





I & R PLATOON ENGAGEMENT AT POAKUM, WARONG, AND AUCHE

