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PREFACE

30 January 1956

The librarian and assistant librarians of The Infantry School library were of great assistance in the gathering of information and material used to support this monograph. They were considerate and courteous throughout the time that the author was doing research in the library.

There are four annexes that will be of value to the reader in following the actions which took place in the combat examples.

Maps B, C and D are reproductions of maps used to support the monograph written by Major Randolph L. Jones.

The point of view expressed in this paper is that of the author -- not necessarily that of The Infantry School or The Department of the Army.



Signature

INTRODUCTION

Correct and successful command and leadership at the platoon and company levels is not conducive to long life because the commander or the leader must constantly expose himself in order to lead and maintain control of all actions that are undertaken by his units. (2: 1).

This monograph was prepared to bring vividly to the attention of all junior officers that command and leadership are of the highest importance during any offensive actions in mountainous terrain. It will cover the actions of Company A, 34th Infantry, 24th U. S. Division, on 15 August 1950, while engaged with the enemy on the NAKTONG RIVER LINE. It will also cover the actions of Company K, 398th Infantry, 100th U. S. Division, in the vicinity of HILL 578 overlooking MOYENMOUTIER, FRANCE, from 19 through 20 November 1944, during the fighting through the VOGES MOUNTAINS. (5).

After the actions of each combat example have been set forth in narrative form a discussion will follow. In this discussion each principle of leadership as outlined in problem 6193-1 will be applied to the actions of the different unit commanders. It will bring out the principles as they were applied and whether the actions were negative or positive in nature.

For the benefit of the reader the principles of leadership as outlined in problem 6193-1 are listed as follows (1: 7-8):

1. Be Technically and Tactically Proficient.
2. Know yourself and Seek Self-Improvement.
3. Know Your Men and Look Out for Their Welfare.
4. Keep Your Men Informed.

5. Set The Example.
6. Insure that the Task is Understood, Supervised and Accomplished.
7. Train Your Men as a Team.
8. Make Sound and Timely Decisions.
9. Develop a Sense of Responsibility among Subordinates.
10. Employ Your Command in accordance with its Capabilities.
11. Seek Responsibility and Take Responsibility for Your Actions.

In every combat example that can be found it would be possible to apply the eleven principles of leadership and to determine which ones had been adhered to and which ones were not followed. It is true that many actions have been accomplished in which principles of leadership were misused, but if they had been applied to the utmost, the action could have been accomplished in less time, with fewer losses of men and equipment.

DISCUSSION

"Small unit actions make the initiative and leadership of the subordinate commanders of highest importance". (6: 6) It is the duty of every small unit commander in the United States Army to apply the principles of leadership with all the power that is vested in him. Each commander has a certain way in which he will be able to apply these principles, but in the end product, victory over the enemy is essential. With this in mind a discussion of two combat examples and how the principles of leadership were applied in each case will follow.

COMBAT EXAMPLE NUMBER ONE (See Map A)(4: 20-30) (7)

On 15 August 1950, Company A, 34th Infantry, 24th Division, was ordered to attack and seize the high ground to their front along the NAKTONG RIVER LINE. The enemy in this area was very strong, in that they had brought two infantry regiments across the NAKTONG RIVER in the past two days and were preparing an all-out assault to break through the United Nations lines and drive them out of KOREA. Early in the morning when the attack was to start, it was raining and the cloud formations were very low. Plans were limited in that the platoon leaders had very little time to plan for the attack. The morale of individuals within the company was high, but the company had many inexperienced men who were confused.

When the order was received by the company commander of Company A early in the morning of 15 August 1950, there was very little time to plan the attack. Company commander of Company A called his 1st platoon leader to his command post and in very few words gave the 1st platoon the mission of leading the attack on the company objective.

The time of the attack was set for 0700 on 15 August 1950. The

company started from its present position which was about a mile and a half from the base of the ridge line that they were to seize. The 1st platoon led with the 2d platoon and 3d platoon following in a column of platoons. Nothing was ever said of the actions of the weapons platoon. The company reached the stream that was at the base of the objective, and started up the steep slope, when it was fired upon by the enemy machine guns. The 1st platoon in the lead was pinned down and the platoon leader took cover behind a native grave mound about one hundred and fifty yards up the side of the hill. The 1st platoon could not move, so the company commander, from his position in the rear of the company, ordered the 2d platoon to proceed up the hill and pass through the 1st platoon.

The platoon leader worked his platoon up the hill to the vicinity of where the 1st platoon was pinned down and made his way to the native grave mound where he could talk to the platoon leader of the 1st platoon. When the two were together the enemy started to fire long-range fire at the grave mound. It was here that the 1st and 2d platoon leaders were both wounded.

There was still no sight of the company commander in the vicinity of the lead platoons.

The 1st platoon built up a base of fire that retired the enemy fire, and the 2d platoon passed through the 1st platoon positions. The 2d platoon had a column of squads, each man starting about five yards behind the preceding man. The men of the 2d platoon were fired upon, but by running and taking cover when they could, they reached the assault position just in front of the enemy positions.

While the 1st and 2d platoons were engaged with the enemy the 3d platoon had lost its bearings and had wandered to a position where it

was of no use to the company.

When the 2d platoon was in the assault position and had started the assault, it was every man for himself. The platoon sergeant was on the reverse side of the slope giving first aid to wounded men. There were many brave men in the 2d platoon, but they did not fight as a team. In a very short time they had run low on ammunition although each man had started out with two bandoleers and a full belt of M-1 clips (4:25). Someone in the platoon tried to get more ammunition, and also to have the 3d platoon move up and help them on the objective. A runner was sent back to the company commander to tell him what the situation was in the 2d platoon area. He sent back the message to pull out. From the base of the hill where the 1st platoon had been leading until the 2d platoon was ordered to pull out, there was only a time lapse of forty-seven minutes. Another attack had failed.

With the short narrative of the action that took place within the forty-seven minutes that Company A had used to try to seize the objective which was assigned by the battalion commander, look at each of the leadership principles and see if they had been followed.

BE TECHNICALLY AND TACTICALLY PROFICIENT. The company commander did not know his job thoroughly. The formation used by the company under the circumstances was good, but the company commander should have been with his leading elements all the time and not in the safety of the rear area where he could not see what was going on. The platoon leaders of the 1st and 2d platoons were wounded at the outset of the battle, and did not have the chance to prove their leadership ability.

KNOW YOURSELF AND SEEK SELF-IMPROVEMENT. Although this principle was not violated in this action, there was much need for self-improvement for three of the leaders in the company. The company commander

needed to seek self-improvement with an emphasis placed where he should be during the attack. The platoon sergeant of the 2d platoon had to learn that his place was with the platoon in the action and not giving first aid to the wounded while a bitter fight was going on between his platoon and the enemy. The platoon leader of the 3d platoon must be able to follow orders and get his platoon to the place which was given to him in the attack order.

KNOW YOUR MEN AND LOOK OUT FOR THEIR WELFARE. The welfare of the company as a whole was not taken into consideration by the company commander. He was not with the lead elements of the company and did not know what was going on within his company. The platoon sergeant of the 2d platoon was not taking care of his men. He was letting them fight for themselves and by doing so, many good men were lost in this action.

KEEP YOUR MEN INFORMED. There was not much the company commander or any of the leaders within the company could do in respect to this principle. The order from battalion was given with very little time for either the company commander or the platoon leaders to make a good reconnaissance of the area which would have to be fought over.

SET THE EXAMPLE. The only good examples that were set in the company were by individual members of the 2d platoon. Each one was individual in that they fought the enemy with all the determination that could be expected of any American soldier. For this they died, without help from other members of the platoon or the company. The company commander by virtue of his position when the battle was going on, was one of the main reasons the attack did not succeed. He must be up in the thick of the battle to inspire the men in the company. The 2d platoon sergeant should have been leading his men on the objective and not caring for

the wounded.

INSURE THAT THE TASK IS UNDERSTOOD, SUPERVISED AND ACCOMPLISHED.

The task was not understood by the company. The 3d platoon became lost and did not physically aid in the accomplishment of the assigned mission of the company. The supervision of the task or mission was not undertaken by any of the leaders in the company. And last, as the combat example brought out, the mission was a failure.

TRAIN YOUR MEN AS A TEAM. Within the company the 1st and 2d platoons worked as a team. It took some time to get the teamwork going after the platoon leaders of the respective platoons were wounded, but the 1st platoon did give good fire support to the 2d platoon as it advanced to the objective. Where the teamwork fell down was in that the 2d platoon fought as individuals and that the 3d platoon never got into position to accomplish the mission that was assigned to the platoon.

MAKE SOUND AND TIMELY DECISIONS. The company commander made a serious error in this action when he sent the message to the 2d platoon to pull out. If he had been with his lead platoon, or at least where he could see what was going on, he could have committed the 1st platoon or had the 3d platoon in position so that they could have exploited the action of the 2d platoon and captured the objective.

DEVELOP A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AMONG SUBORDINATES. The platoon leaders of the 1st and 2d platoons knew what their responsibilities were and tried to carry them out. It was the way in which the company commander gave his orders that made them question in their own minds the soundness of the orders that were issued. When the 1st platoon was pinned down the orders to the 2d platoon were to move through the 1st platoon and continue to the objective.

EMPLOY YOUR COMMAND IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CAPABILITIES. As in most

operations in mountainous terrain it is the belief that the company initially was employed in accordance with its capabilities. There are few times where two platoons can attack along a ridgeline abreast of each other. After the first action had taken place, where the 1st platoon had been pinned down and the 3d platoon had become lost, the principle was broken. A rifle company is a powerful unit when all platoons are used to capture an objective. But, as the fight went on, only the 2d platoon was used to try to gain the objective. Fire support by the 1st platoon and a maneuver by the 3d platoon could have brought success for the company.

SEEK RESPONSIBILITY AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS. The company commander did not seek the responsibility that had been vested in him. At no time was he in a position, after the attack had started, where he could guide the actions of his subordinate units and gain the victory that was within grasp.

COMBAT EXAMPLE NUMBER TWO (See Maps B, C, and D) (5)

The second combat example is the operation of Company K, 398th Infantry, 100th U. S. Division, in the vicinity of HILL 578 overlooking MOYENMOUTIER, FRANCE, 19 - 20 November 1944, during the fighting through the VOGES MOUNTAINS (5: 3). The mission of Company K was to capture objectives 1, 2 and 3. As the action turned out, they played an important part in the capture of HILL 578 which was initially the objective of the 1st Battalion of the 398th Infantry. The enemy was not too strong in this area, but they did have good positions and it would take a superior force to dislodge them from their present positions. The plans which were made by Company K for the attack were clear and concise, in that everyone knew what was expected of him.

ATTACK FOR FIRST OBJECTIVE (See Map B) (5: 14-17). At 0700 hours on 19 November 1944 the Company K commander, followed by the 3d platoon, 1st platoon, and 2d platoon (minus) crossed the line of departure, the LA PLAINE RIVER near the town of LA TROUCHE. As the company moved up the slope of the hill, it was fired upon by one enemy machine gun. The men of Company K hit the ground and would not fire back. It took the action of the company commander, who started to fire his carbine, to get the men to fire. The company still could not move and the 1st platoon was sent to the right from its position in rear of the 3d platoon. The platoon had some protection and was going to flank the enemy machine gun and move on to the objective.

As the 1st platoon moved up the draw toward the objective, mortars began to shell enemy machine gun position with deadly accuracy. At this time, the 3d platoon leader dashed toward the enemy position and the platoon immediately joined in the assault. Simultaneously, the 1st platoon moved on the company objective, firing at enemy trying to escape.

By 0830 Company K was on the first objective and so notified the battalion commander.

The aggressive action of the company commander and platoon leaders had led the way for the company to capture objective 1 with very little time lost.

CAPTURE OF SECOND OBJECTIVE (See Map C) (5: 17-20). As Company K had to move across open ground, supporting fires were called for, to hold the enemy down. At 0900, 19 November 1944, Company K moved out. The leading elements, the 1st platoon with its leader right up in front, moved in on the enemy so quickly that the enemy was still in the bunkers. Several positions were immediately overrun and the occupants taken

prisoner. Objective 2 was taken, and again the leadership by the company commander and platoon leaders had paid off.

The battalion commander was notified of the action. The battalion commander then ordered Company K to capture BOIS DU PETIT FAYS, the company's third objective.

CAPTURE OF THE THIRD OBJECTIVE (See Map C) (5: 20-23). At approximately 1130, Company K moved from the second objective toward BOIS DU PETIT FAYS. The 1st platoon and light machine gun section moved out on the right, with the 3d platoon on the left and slightly echeloned to the left. Again the company commander was with his lead unit, and stayed with it until the company was in BOIS DU PETIT FAYS.

The 1st platoon had moved on to the objective and advanced into the woods which it was to secure. The 3d platoon was just closing onto the objective when the 1st platoon was taken under fire by the enemy.

The 1st platoon continued to close in on its objective. The platoon leader continued to push forward to locate and destroy the enemy gun. At the same time the 3d platoon moved toward the extremity of the objective in its sector. Just as it began to take up positions, an enemy counterattack was received directly on its front. Although a fierce fire fight was in progress, the platoon sergeant sped his men into position. Although he had been wounded a few minutes earlier, he stayed with the platoon until the enemy counterattack was repulsed.

The company commander, who had been with the 1st platoon, moved very rapidly to the 3d platoon area at the time of the counterattack. As soon as it had been repulsed he moved back to the 1st platoon area where he directed fires into the woods and here again the enemy was repulsed.

Company K had moved into BOIS DU PETIT FAYS just prior to 1300

and succeeded in clearing the area at approximately 1345. The battalion commander was informed of the situation. Company K was told to dig in and hold the area. It was also informed that the remainder of the battalion was well behind the positions now held by Company K.

With the leadership of all key personnel, Company K had taken three objectives between the hours of 0700 and 1345 on 19 November 1944.

THE ATTACK ON HILL 578 (See Map D) (5: 24-27). On the morning of 20 November 1944 the 3d Battalion was ordered to attack and seize HILL 578 overlooking MOYENMOUTIER, FRANCE.

Company K's mission was that of battalion reserve. Company K commander decided to move the company in rear of Company I. No specific location had been given to Company K commander for the location of the reserve. As the slopes were steep and covered with underbrush, a column of files was chosen as the formation to be used. The command group led and was followed by the 1st platoon and light machine gun section, 2d platoon, mortar section, and 3d platoon. Connecting files were established between the leading elements of Company K and the rear of Company I.

As the battalion moved out toward the objective at 1000 hours on 20 November 1944, a slow rain began to fall. The advance through the underbrush and up the rocky, cliff-like hillside was slow, but at 1255, after meeting scattered enemy resistance, the leading elements had reached the summit.

Company K had struggled up the steep rugged slope behind Company I and when the head of the Company was near the crest, small-arms fire broke out along the ridge in Company I area. Company K commander passed the word for everyone to get down and face the rear and flanks. When the forward units failed to move, Company K commander moved forward to

see what was holding up the unit. The battalion commander who was located on the right flank of Company L, instructed Company K to move on to the crest of the hill and begin the organization of the hill.

Just as Company K commander had returned to his unit and had started it moving forward again, a counterattack was received against the Company I area. The fire was heavy and it forced Company K command group to take cover.

The 3d platoon leader, hearing the fire and being in a position where he was not pinned down, moved his platoon from its position in the rear of the column, and came up on the flank of the German force, surprised them completely, and broke up the attack.

With the counterattack broken up, Company K swept to the top of the hill and reorganization of the position was completed. The crest of the hill was gained at approximately 1600 hours on 20 November 1944.

With the short narrative of the action that took place in the two days when Company K was attacking and had seized four objectives which had been assigned to the battalion, it is appropriate at this time to review the principles of leadership and see which ones have been adhered to or which ones have not been followed.

BE TECHNICALLY AND TACTICALLY PROFICIENT. From the written reports of the action of Company K, it is brought out very clearly that this leadership principle was followed. The company commander and subordinate leaders knew their jobs, they were at the head of their units, and they knew what was going on at all times. The company commander used the formations that were desired to accomplish each of the missions assigned his company. The platoon leaders knew their jobs and in many cases, on their own initiative, swung the tide of battle in favor of the company.

KNOW YOURSELF AND SEEK SELF-IMPROVEMENT. It is felt that this

principle was followed at all times. Each one of the leaders of Company K knew his capabilities and was using them to the fullest of his ability. They were aggressive, quick thinkers, and wanted to lead at all times of the attack.

KNOW YOUR MEN AND LOOK OUT FOR THEIR WELFARE. If there is any one thing that stands out in combat, where the leader lets his men get pinned down and will do nothing to get them going, it is that he is not looking out for their welfare. By this it is meant that if the unit can be kept on the move it will not suffer the casualties that would occur if the unit was pinned down for a considerable length of time. The company commander and the leaders of each of the platoons kept their men in mind at all times. Very few times were the units pinned down that one of the leaders did not get the attack going again.

KEEP YOUR MEN INFORMED. As to the individual man in the company, it cannot be said that he was informed, but from the actions of the company commander and his orders to his platoon leaders, it is felt that the company knew what they were doing at all times.

SET THE EXAMPLE. If there is any one principle of leadership that stood out in this action, it was the one of setting the example. When the company had been fired on and the men would not fire back, it was the action of the company commander which started the fire power that was needed to reach objective 1. As the assault platoons closed in on an objective it was the platoon leader who was out in front leading the way to the crest of the hill.

INSURE THAT THE TASK IS UNDERSTOOD, SUPERVISED AND ACCOMPLISHED. The company commander and the platoon leaders had control of their units at all times. They moved from one area of their units to another if the situations deemed it necessary. The missions were accomplished so fast

on the first three objectives that the company had to hold up so that the rest of the battalion could come abreast.

TRAIN YOUR MEN AS A TEAM. Teamwork in Company K was outstanding in that each platoon knew what was expected of them. They could and did arise to situations that they did not think they would encounter. The swift action of the 1st platoon on the second objective and the action of the 3d platoon on HILL 578 show that teamwork within a unit will pay off.

MAKE SOUND AND TIMELY DECISIONS. The decisions of the company commander on objectives 1 and 2, on how to employ his company, led to a quick capture of those objectives. The outstanding example is the decision of the 3d platoon leader, who was not under fire from enemy weapons, to move to the right on HILL 578 and hit the enemy from the flank. As the example brings out, this caught the enemy force by complete surprise and repulsed the counterattack.

DEVELOP A SENSE OF RESPONSIBILITY AMONG SUBORDINATES. It is strongly felt that the company commander had developed the ^{sense} responsibility among his subordinates. The platoon leaders took upon themselves many of the burdens that could have rested on the company commander.

EMPLOY YOUR COMMAND IN ACCORDANCE WITH ITS CAPABILITIES. Each mission that was assigned by the company commander was within the capabilities of the unit to which the mission was given. At no time did the platoon falter or get into a position where it could not accomplish the mission.

SEEK RESPONSIBILITY AND TAKE RESPONSIBILITY FOR YOUR ACTIONS. All the leaders of Company K can be proud of their role in this action. They did seek responsibility and they can be justly proud of the accomplishments of the company. ~~It is not hard to take responsibility for your actions when they are of such an outstanding nature.~~

CONCLUSION

Leadership of subordinate commanders is of the highest importance in mountain warfare (3:153). Without leadership many unit actions have failed to accomplish their mission. If the commanders had applied the principles of leadership to the action, their units could have gained success instead of failing to accomplish the mission.

In the action that Company A, 34th Infantry, was engaged in, it has been shown that very few if any of the principles of leadership were applied.

The company commander was the key figure in the action. He was not up with the lead elements and did not know what was going on as the attack developed. His presence with the leading elements could have been the deciding factor in the capture of the hill.

The platoon sergeant showed no leadership in that he was not with his platoon at the critical time, but was in a place where he was safe from enemy fire, doing a job that should have been left for the medical personnel in the company.

Company A apparently consisted of tough men able to accomplish a tough mission. In this particular combat action, these soldiers were denied accomplishment because they were without leadership. (2:8)

In the action in which Company K, 398th Infantry, was engaged, the leadership of the company commander and platoon leaders stood out very clearly. As the action took place, each of the principles of leadership were applied with the highest degree of skill.

The company commander was always with the leading elements. He moved from one area to the other when the action deemed it necessary.

He set the example many times so that his company would keep moving

and accomplish the mission which had been assigned.

The platoon leader of the 3d platoon was aggressive all the way through the action. His decisions and leadership payed off many times, in that he did not wait to be told what to do. He used the principles of leadership with skill to accomplish the mission which was assigned to the 3d platoon and to aid in the overall mission of the company.

The two combat examples show that leadership is of the highest importance in mountainous terrain. Without leadership the action has little or no chance of being successful. Where leadership is present at all levels of command the mission can and will be a successful operation.

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N2uh
038dR

ENEMY
POSITION

2d PLATOON

ROUTE OF WITHDRAWAL

N

POSITION REACHED
BY 3d PLATOON

1st PLATOON

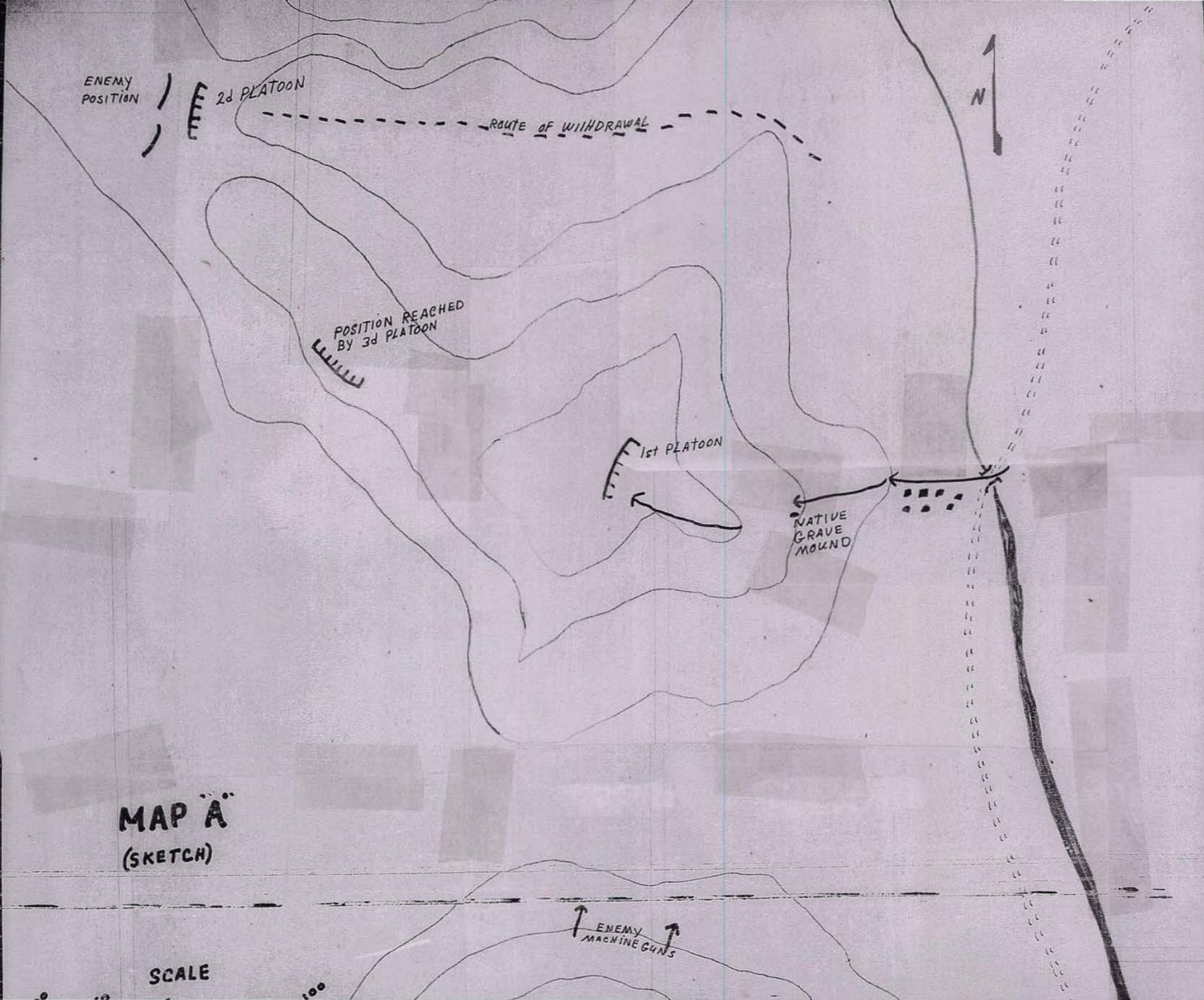
NATIVE
GRAVE
MOUND

MAP "A"
(SKETCH)

SCALE

↑ ENEMY
MACHINE GUNS ↑

100



MAP "B"
ATTACK ON
FIRST OBJECTIVE

LA TROUCHE

LA PLAINE RIVER

ROUTE OF COMPANY IN COLUMN

21K 398

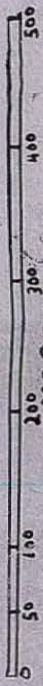
1K 397

3K 396

1st OBJ

SCALE
YARDS

CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 METERS

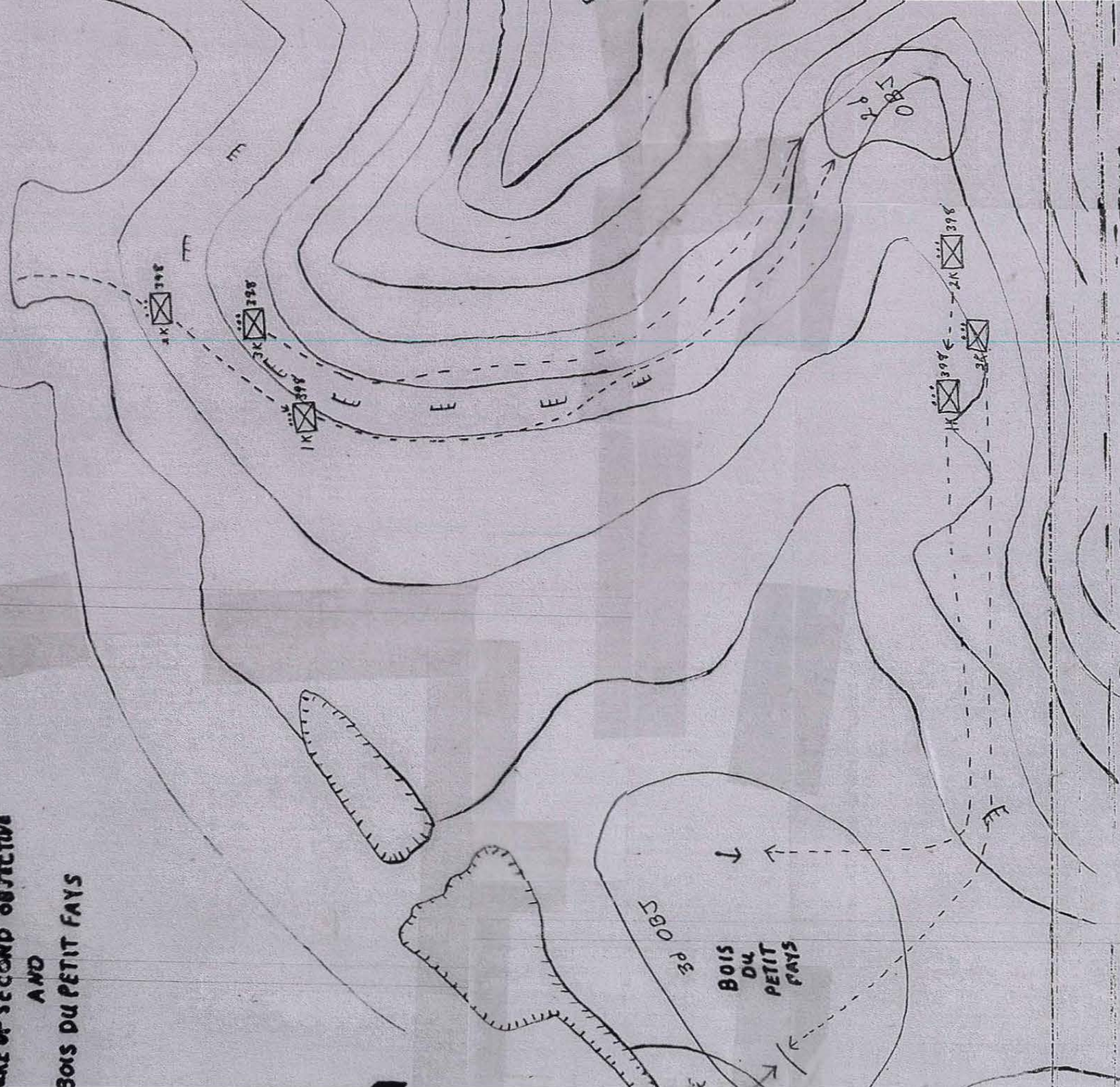


MAP C

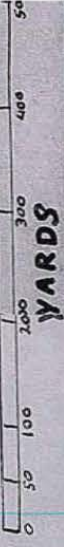
ATURE OF SECOND OBJECTIVE

AND

BOIS DU PETIT FAYS



SCALE



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 METERS

LES DU
MONT PAYS

ROUTE OF I & K COMPANIES

MOVEMENT of 2d PLATOON

COUNTERATTACK

ROUTE OF L COMPANY

3K 398
2K 398
1K 398
I 398

L 398

578



MAP D

ACTION ON
HILL 578

SCALE

