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MARCHING FIRE

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## PREFACE

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In writing this monograph I would like to give my thanks to the staff of The Infantry School Library, who have been most willing and cooperative in their efforts to aid me in the research on marching fire. Special acknowledgement is also made to all those individuals and agencies whose materials have been incorporated or utilized in this research.

It will aid the reader if he will attempt to put himself into a situation where marching fire might be utilized as he is reading this paper. The examples contained herein may very well provide the reader with a desired situation. The three annexes will aid the reader in understanding the situations.

It should be noted that throughout this monograph a great emphasis has been placed on supporting fire and fire superiority. I have done this because after having employed marching fire in Korea, I cannot imagine it being divorced from that fire support necessary to provide an infantry unit superiority of fire.

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.

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## INTRODUCTION

Marching Fire. A tool of the trade that must be understood by all ranks in the infantry regiment from private to colonel.

The failure of the squad leader in his mission can result in the failure of the regimental commander in his. The failure of a fire support unit to support this squad leader in his employment of marching fire can also result in failure for the regimental commander. The failure of the fire support unit and the squad leader to understand what relation they have to each other will result in failure for the regiment.

Major General J C Fry, while not specifically endorsing marching fire itself, has stated, "The army exists to win battles and in the final analysis this depends on small-unit commanders. Indirectly, it also means that commanders at the company, battalion and regimental level must possess the know-how to see that squads and platoons are taught how to reach their objectives with the minimum loss of life." (5)

It is my intent, through the presentation and discussion of examples of marching fire to aid the squad and platoon leader in reaching their objectives with the minimum loss of life. At the same time I hope to aid the regimental commander and his subordinate commanders by giving them some of the "know-how" that can be imparted on these squads and platoons.

I intend to cover such items as fire support and fire superiority, control, movement, and the psychological effects of marching fire.

Marching fire is for the purpose of this paper synonymous with assault fire. Assault fire is that action short of the objective in which a unit of infantry engages the enemy with fire, in volume and accuracy, fired from the shoulder or hip, as the unit walks rapidly toward the objective in a line formation. It should be initiated at a distance of less than one hundred and fifty yards from the objective. (14,56)

An infantry unit moves across the valley and starts up the hill. As it moves, it takes advantage of all the cover and concealment that is available. If you were a member of this unit you might be feeling a little apprehensive or have a touch of the fear of the unknown that lies ahead. You hear the "wack" of the supporting machine gun fire as it goes over your head. You hope its yours. You see the artillery and mortars splash and crash on the objective. Your glad its yours. Then you reach a position where you can see the objective clearly with little left between you and the enemy except the noise of your support. The leader signals for his subunits to form in line. You move on again having hardly stopped. On another signal the entire line starts firing and continues to walk, faster now than before. That splash and crash suddenly stops and soon you notice that you can no longer hear that "wack" over your head. Instead now you hear rifles on both sides of you. Sounds like it did that day you were on the range. You get sort of an elated feeling as you near the top of the hill. Then you remember what the leader said about the enemy. "A bullet through the head if he sticks his head out, or a bullet through the back if he runs, the enemy will stay and be a casualty in the hole he dug to protect himself." You continue on and over the hill. Mission accomplished.

Anything more that this leader and his men can learn about marching fire is going to insure even more the accomplishment of the colonel's mission.

## DISCUSSION

Perhaps there has never been a military man who was any more emphatic when it comes to the use of marching fire than the late General George S. Patton Jr. That he was a proponent of marching fire is very well evidenced by one short phrase from a letter of instructions that he issued on 3 April 1944. "USE MARCHING FIRE". (17,47)

These three words were the product of experience and victory. They were most befitting when issued by General Patton and can be equally so today. However it is essential that we know the principles if we are to recommend or order its use in training and battle.

The following example of how marching fire was employed by the 1st Battalion of the 411th Infantry Regiment in Europe during the latter stages of World War II brings out several important features of marching fire.

In the words of the Commanding Officer of the 1st Battalion, 411th Infantry, "When the Rat-race" across Germany and Austria started, my battalion was organized to advance as a separate unit with all men mounted on tanks, TD's, and anything else we could get. We traveled day and night for six days and covered about three hundred and fifty miles. We were the first unit through the Brenner Pass. In order not to be held up to long by small detachments of enemy, that depended for it's speed on the use of marching fire. We took it for granted that when we ran into something, that the first platoon would be fired on and pinned down, so our leading platoon was always a normal platoon and they usually rode on two tanks. Our 2nd platoon carried the Sunday punch and was somewhat over strength. It rode on two tank destroyers. When we ran into something, the first platoon would hit the ground and start shooting. The second platoon would form with two squads forward and one back and advance immediately using marching

fire, straight at the opposition. The two TD's would go to whichever flank looked better and would shoot as hard as they could. Our two leading squads each had a LMG and four BAR's and the rear squad had another BAR. It was fast action with plenty of "Banzai" and it worked every time. We used it four times. We never ran into enemy artillery, perhaps because we worked so fast, and we never had to call our own artillery. The men walked and they fired from any position they preferred. With two tanks, two TD's and all those arms, we sounded like a division going into action. The psychological effect on our men was very good, and it was probably to the same degree bad for the enemy. Similar tactics were used against road blocks and against small villages and separate houses. (13,2)

The speed with which the infantry was able to mount its assaults in this example resulted in the taking of objectives without undue delay. It is important though to remember that this speed is not termed haste. As in any assault, when it is planned, one of the items arranged for is control. The control measures taken by the leader can be various forms. Foremost he wants to be able to control those elements of his unit in their formation while they are engaged in marching fire. His ability to position himself in such a place that he can direct the efforts of his entire unit to the maximum is of utmost importance. Generally if he is slightly to the rear of the base unit (squad, platoon etc.) he has the advantage of visually seeing the movement of the unit and being able to move laterally can correct deficiencies that occur in the alignment of the formation and direct the attention of squads on specific targets. (14,5)

It must be remembered that while employing marching fire the unit may not have communications other than prearranged signals and word of mouth. The noise of battle often times precludes oral orders being issued at a distance more than a few yards. (8,130)

Hand and arm signals, proper use of subordinates in directing the assault, and a husky pair of lungs during the assault results in control during the use of marching fire.

Those control measures desired do not come automatically. They should be implemented to a degree that they are S O P. This especially so when the unit is in a fast moving situation such as this example. There very well may not be time enough, prior to the time that the unit is deployed.

✓ A means quite feasible, when armored vehicles are being used with or in the support of infantry in marching fire in a fast moving situation, would be the employment of tracer fire from the armored vehicles on the objective. This will result in guiding the infantry unit on the objective, initially, thus insuring that the infantry is placing its maximum effort on the enemy. It must be remembered that in utilizing marching fire for its surprise effect through speed, such as it is used in this example that there may not always be as much time available for reconnaissance as the infantry leader would like.

We can assume that since marching fire was used four times during this period with success by the 1st Battalion that adequate control measures were arranged. Although it is difficult to maintain maximum fire by the infantry platoon during marching fire with two squads up and one back, this prior arrangement must have greatly facilitated the speed with which the 1st battalion could neutralize the small detachments that they encountered. This in turn facilitates control since each man knows what his job is in the employment of marching fire. The leader that understands that he should control the firers and not the fire of his unit, will be able to make these changes quicker. (10,82)

The terrain being the only thing that changes minor reajustments of the unit can be implemented depending on the amount of time that the infantry leader has prior to the assault.



This in no way diminishes the great importance that terrain has always had. Since there is a prearranged plan, the terrain can in fact be utilized better. It must be remembered once again that in the case of the First Battalion, speed was the chief reason for the use of marching fire. (8,2)

The lack of control often times results in subunits failing to move at the same rate as the main unit in the assault. It may even result in one unit hitting the ground which lessens the effect of marching fire itself. This can be disastrous, both for the subunit and the entire unit since this may afford the enemy the opportunity to do what he most wants to do. Fire back!

It might be well to remember what Colonel S L A Marshal has said on the subject of halting. "Once halted, even if there has been no damage, the line never moves as strongly again." (10,131)

The difficulty of control is magnified once a unit has hit the ground. During this particular time it is totally ineffective except for individual exploits, unless the leader has taken prior measures to get the unit moving again. General Patton put it this way. "To halt under fire is folly. To halt under fire and not fire back is suicide." (17,47)

The leader must depend even more on his subordinates than usual in order to get the assault underway just as quick as possible again. (8,128) Precious minutes of the assault are being wasted while the unit is on the ground. (8,129) The enemy is at the advantage since in all probability supporting fires have diminished to the extent that there may be little or no fires on the objective. The enemy has no reason for remaining down.

It is essential that the unit gain that fire superiority once again, immediately. In the case of the squad, squad leaders must move if necessary to each man and take what ever measures are necessary to get them firing on the objective. The platoon leader must ensure that the squad leaders are doing this by moving to a position where he can give them the appropriate

orders or make his presence known. (8,129) In addition adequate measures have to be taken to ensure that all the fire support that is available. Remember the unit may be so close to the objective that some fire support (artillery and heavy mortar) could not even support them with a reasonable degree of safety. A prearranged signal for machine gun, light mortar, recoilless rifle, or tank fire at this time could be worth its weight in gold.

Once the fire superiority has been lost, generally the riflemen can not regain it by themselves because they probably have not been the sole factor in obtaining it to begin with. General J Lawton Collins has stated, "there is a mistaken idea that fire superiority is gained solely by riflemen caused by a lack of understanding of our fundamentals of organization. Of course I appreciate the importance of the role played by rifle men but their primary job is not to gain fire superiority. Their primary job is to kill the individual enemy by accurate fire. Rifle fire contributes particularly at close in ranges, but as a general rule fire superiority is gained by the skillful use of the fire support unit or other support available and appropriate; such as artillery, armor, or air in conjunction with the fire of the holding or maneuvering elements". (3,10)

The 1st Battalion, 411th infantry did not have to use its artillery however they did make use of their Tank Destroyers in a supporting role. Again in a fast moving situation where not as much is known of the enemy situation, a prearranged signal for close in supporting fires can result in the continued advance of a unit using marching fire if that unit's assault did bog down. This signal carried as S O P would aid again in the speed with which the unit engaged its objective and in turn the continuation of the entire unit towards its main objective.

The employment of the light machine guns with the assaulting squads in the example, while a workable solution here may not always be.

The use of machine guns in the line or in a strictly supporting role has both its advantages and disadvantages. In the case of the 1st Battalion, the least that can be said is that an arrangement was made for their use. Since again speed was essential and a good position for supporting machine guns may not have been available and most assuredly not foreseen their employment was quite adequate in the line. The light machine guns do "beef up" the line considerably.

One of the first considerations in the employment of the light machine guns in the supporting role naturally is, can the marching fire unit be supported? Is the terrain such that you can provide over head or flanking fire and derive the maximum benefit from that fire? The machine gun can be utilized by firing through prearranged gaps in the line. (1) Of Course again this last method would take a maximum amount of coordination for safety measures and a necessary gap (s) in the line would be needed, which might result in less control. In the 1st Battalion's situation it was not probably feasible, since the loss of control would reduce the speed they desired.

The light machine gun in the support role can cover the maximum amount of the objective. The gunner has the advantage of being able to place fire on the maximum number of targets on the objective since he probably has good observation and is not restricted to a certain sector of the objective. The machine gun also can deliver more continuous fire since the problem of supply, reloading, and corrective action to stoppages is not as great while in support. The position of the machine gun places it at a disadvantage in that it cannot be used once its fires have been masked by the line of moving riflemen and also that its fires cannot be controlled as readily by the marching fire unit leader once marching fire has been initiated. The problem of getting the machine guns forward for the reorganization also must be considered.

The utilization of the machine gun on the line with the marching fire element has several advantages. A chief advantage being the deterrent effect that it can have on the enemy when it is advancing with the rest of the unit. Although its fire will be placed on a sector of the objective to its front the leader of the unit can direct the gunner to place fire on other specific targets. The machine gun also can have a good psychological effect upon the individual members of the marching fire unit, with the knowledge of this added fire power to the line. (1)

The big disadvantage of its bulky-ness, difficulty of handling, ammunition supply, and reloading can be resolved to some degree. A method of how this is resolved is partly found in what Major George P W Whittington Jr has stated in his article, "Miracle of Marching Fire." "The light machine gun may be used in marching fire. A leather or cloth grip (asbestos mitten works well) maybe placed around the perforated jacket to protect the firers hand. Belts may be cut into short lengths to make them easier to handle." (17,7)

The psychological effect of marching fire upon the individuals in the 1st Battalion has been expressed as very good. At the same time it has been expressed as bad for the enemy. It is important that we remember that the psychological effect, on both our troops and the enemy is working in our favor." Firing while he is advancing, gives the soldier greater confidence in himself. He is doing something actually to hurt the enemy, not merely offering his body as a target for the fire of the defencer. He knows that success of his attack depends mostly on how soon he can reach the enemy position, therefore he is in a hurry to do so. He does not feel an overwhelming compulsion to seek safety on the ground." (17,7)

The enemy at the same time is in an entirely different state of mind as well as being. "The enemy looses freedom of action. He must remain down, for there are few if any lulls in the hail of small arms fire that

is striking around him. He has no means of determining the size of the attacking force. Judging by the volume of the fire it must seem much larger than it actually is. In many cases he can not even withdraw." (17,7)

It must be assumed that the Battalion Commander of the 1st Battalion, 411th Infantry took this fully into account.

At 1600 hours on the 23rd of December 1944, the 1st Battalion, 517th Parachute Infantry Regiment assembled in a small patch of woods, one mile north of SOY, BELGIUM. (Annex A, Pt.A) The strength of the battalion was 486 officers and men. It had its basic load of ammunition and emergency rations had been issued. The battalion had the dual mission of relieving the encircled headquarters troops at HOTTON, BELGIUM to the East and establishing the MLR along the SOY-HOTTON highway. There was no time for food, rest, or reconnaissance.

At 1715 the battalion crossed the LD East of SOY while enemy artillery was falling in SOY itself. The battalion sustained light casualties from the artillery however met resistance immediately. Company B was dispatched to neutralize the resistance to the south. The rest of the battalion remained in position for the night.

At dawn 24 December 1944 two platoons from Company A were dispatched with four medium tanks and six half-tracks. This force was given the name "Force" Boyle and had the mission of encircling HOTTON in a wide circle to the north and then south through NY, BELGIUM.

At 1700 hours the main body ("Force" Frazer) under Major D. W. Frazer reorganized and continued the attack down the railroad that generally paralleled the SOY-HOTTON Highway. "Force" Frazer widely deployed moved across open ground closely supported by tanks. The going became difficult immediately. Enemy high-velocity guns, which had been used as anti-personnel weapons the previous night, stopped six of the nine tanks by 1730 hours.

Heavy mortar fire fell in the area. Using marching fire, "Force" Frazer gained the cover of the woods bordering the railroad at a cost of heavy casualties.

Through out the freezing night Major Frazer's force (four decimated platoons) crawled forward along the railroad in a rough skirmish line. All personnel laid down a heavy volume of small arms fire to cover their advance (Enemy resistance was at fanatical proportions) The "Frazer" force made steady, if slow progress.

By 0400 hours resistance had died down. Major Frazer ordered a halt for reorganization. The "Frazer" force then continued on to HOTTON with only sporadic resistance. (9,48)

This example brings out one big point. That point being that it is essential to have fire superiority if marching fire is to be initiated effectively. It has already been brought out earlier that the riflemen cannot provide that fire superiority alone, although they contribute to it. (1,10) In order that marching fire be effective it is necessary that the leader clearly understand this point.

For what reasons do we utilize marching fire? First of all it is used for the surprise effect it has on the enemy. It has to be assumed that there was little of the element of surprise to be gained in either of the two times that marching fire was used by "Frazer" Force in the above example. In the first case the main body was already under heavy mortar fire. In the second case, which correctly can not be termed marching fire, possibly some of the element of surprise was gained. However it must be remembered what the element of surprise is. Basically its the ability of the Infantry leader to take over where his fire support left off, not giving the enemy a chance to recover. More attacks bog down from hereon than any place else. (14,54)

Second, we use marching fire to get that maximum amount of fire to the front on the objective. The main body did put out the maximum amount of

fire by using marching fire. However this was used to cover their movement to the woods. The main consideration that Major Frazer must have had in his mind at this time was to keep the entire unit moving since they were under mortar fire. At the same time he must have known that it would be suicide not to fire back when he was being fire on. (17,47)

Third, speed has to be taken into consideration. In this case the maximum speed would not permit the use of marching fire since anything faster than a rapid walk would probably end up in more confusion. If we look at it academically Major Frazer had three choices. Leave a base of fire unit to cover the movement to the woods. Move the entire unit at the fastest rate possible and not fire back at all. Control the movement and fire back by the use of marching fire. The employment of anything other than what Major Frazer used might have resulted in even higher casualties since he combined the best qualities of two of his choices into marching fire.

Fourth and perhaps the main point was the maintenance of fire superiority. Obviously this was not possible because fire superiority had not been gained to begin with. Marching fire does not in itself gain fire superiority. (3,10) All commanders must be primarily concerned with marching fire when it is used in the attack, to the degree that they ensure its proper employment by providing training and ensure the proper support by all weapons at their disposal. (5)

The leader employing marching fire is concerned with the same two aspects but in a different way. First he must learn how to employ it. It doesn't just come automatically. He also must know what the significance of the fire support is on the accomplishment of his mission.

The most critical period is when the supporting fires begin to shift from the objective and the load is put on the infantry leaders back to neutralize the enemy position with marching fire. If he waits to see what

the reaction of the enemy will be to his supporting fires, he will find out, but soon. The only thing that has kept the enemy down so far has been the supporting fire. There is no reason for him to stay down if there is no fire on him.

"It (marching fire) keeps the enemy down after the artillery lifts and gives confidence to the man who is using it as he advances. It should be S O P for the crossing of open ground against enemy positions. The light machine guns should participate. Fire superiority is essential. The Germans didn't have superiority but tried it (marching fire) against our positions in the Elbe River bridgehead and all were killed before they reached our line ..... (4,10)

On 7 August 1944 the 10th Infantry Regiment received the mission of going around ANGERS, FRANCE from the west to prevent enemy reinforcements from coming to the assistance of the defending German Garrison in ANGERS. (Annex "B")

At 0930 hours on 7 August the 3rd Battalion, 10th Infantry supported by the 4th F A Battalion was ordered to cross the Maine River south-west of ANGERS. (bridge, Pt A) The 11th Regiment was holding this bridge which was the only one across the Maine River that was still in tact.

The 3rd Battalion had the mission of attacking and siezing the high ground (Pt."B") 1500 yards East of the bridge and across the railroad track. The 3rd Battalion, 11th Infantry was to support the attack by fire from the railroad track.

Companies I and K crossed the bridge at 1030 hours and by 1230 hours all the troops of the 3rd battalion were across the Maine. Company I became pinned down by enemy machine gun and small arms fire while approaching the attack position and 60mm and 81mm mortar plus artillery fires were called to neutralize the enemy fire.



At 1630 hours the 3rd battalion attacked with Company I on the left and Company K on the right. They both crossed the railroad track and prepared to assault the objective (Pt. "B") under cover of 81 mm mortar and artillery fire.

The terrain for Company I was devoid of cover and the enemy had excellent fields of fire and Company K had only slightly better cover. The objective, a huge chateau, was completely surrounded by a thick stone wall.

The companies continued their advance under their supporting fires which in addition to the afore mentioned fires included the company 60 mm mortars and machine guns. They covered the six hundred yards from the railroad to the stone wall using marching fire. Upon reaching the stone wall a grenade fight ensued while members of the companies cut the wire barring entrance through the only usable gate. They then moved through the gate and stopped only when the objective was cleared of Germans.

This key terrain feature has been captured with heavy loss to the enemy and remarkably small number of casualties to the 3rd battalion. (8,19)

The first feature of the assault made by the 3rd Battalion 10th Infantry that will be noted with judgement by the reader is perhaps the distance through which the assault was carried with the employment of marching fire. Six hundred yards is to say the least a considerable distance to advance with two companies employing marching fire.

The ammunition supply angle should be noted. For example a rifleman advancing and firing every three to five steps is going to expend three to four bandoliers of ball ammunition at this distance.

The ability of the leader to control a formation of infantry riflemen in line also has to be considered. In the example of the 3rd Battalion, 10th Infantry the terrain at least was in their favor for control, since

it was open terrain with little cover. A line formation is the most difficult to control. (14,32)

The battalion commander must have taken this into consideration since from the enemy standpoint, with good fields of fire he (enemy) could have played havoc on a column formation moving forward from the railroad tracks to an assault position.

It would be well however for every leader and commander to remember that fire and maneuver is not divorced from marching fire when the latter is employed. "The principle of fire and movement is not changed by the inclusion of marching fire. Nothing prohibits the use of supporting fire element or base of fire if it can be used under the particular conditions. Certainly the moving element of any attacking force should be taught to use marching fire to overcome the resistance in its immediate zone of action." (17,48)

Along with the terrain the Battalion Commander must have considered the effect that the enemy would have on his battalion in the open if the supporting fires did not neutralize the enemy's fires from around and within the stone walls. In all probability the true objective of the marching fire was to reach the stone walls as quickly as possible.

It should be noted that the 3rd battalion used all possible support in its employment of marching fire, to include the fires of another infantry battalion in another regiment. The success that the 3rd Battalion had, resulted to a great extent upon the use of their supporting fires.

The obstacle (stone wall) that surrounded the main objective (chateau) is a good example of what has to be considered before employing marching fires. The obstacle has to be either circumvented or obliterated by some means so that the line can continue across it. The extensiveness of the

obstacle may preclude the employing of marching fire. If, however, marching fire is to be utilized a plan has to be made to eliminate the obstacle prior to the attack.

Engineer troops may well be used for blowing holes in wire, stone, concrete or wooden obstacles. If engineer troops are not available, engineer equipment may be available. Bangelior torpedoes, shaped charges, improvised charges made from TNT or composition "C", should all be considered. This will mean in addition that these obstacles will have to be cleared before the attack or during it. Demolishing obstacles during the attack means the infantry will have to lean even harder into its supporting fires in order that the clearing of obstacles be given some cover.

The infantry is capable of helping itself to a great degree when it comes to the subject of leaning into its fires. In fact they can to a certain degree lean against their fires by employing their own weapons which can have an effect on the enemy similiar to that of their own fire support. The use of the rifle grenades and hand grenades can blind the enemy. (14,72) The 3.5 rocket launcher and recoilless rifles can be utilized to create the impression on the enemy that your artillery and mortars are still firing. (16) He's (the enemy) down in his hole and it's hard for him to distinguish one big noise from another. In addition you are causing additional casualties among the enemy.

In the opinion of the author the commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 10th Infantry Regiment took all the principles of marching fire and applied them as this situation warranted. Where he was at variance with the principles, mainly at the distance at which marching fire was initiated he proved himself right. It must be assumed that

his estimate warranted that.

On 31 December 1944 the German Forces in the SAARGABIET were engaged in defending the Siegfried Line along the east bank of the Saar River. They had established a shallow bridgehead on the western side of the Saar extending from BONUS, Germany to SAARE GUEMINES.

(ANNEX "C")

At 0415 hours 1 January 1945 the 378th Infantry Regiment, (95th Division, right flank regiment of the 12th US Army Group) ordered its 2nd Battalion from UBERHERRN, Germany to attack east along the DIFFERTEN, WERBELN, SCHAFFHAUSEN road and destroy the enemy in that area and drive them back across the Saar River. The battalion was to attack through an area formerly held by elements of the 106 Cavalry Group, left flank element of the 6th US Army Group.

The 2nd Battalion, 378th Infantry began its movement from UBERHERRN, approximately five and a half miles west of SCHAFFHAUSEN, at 0530 hours on 1 January 1945. After several halts, one requiring the dispatching of Company "G" and another requiring a platoon from Company "F" to neutralize intense small arms and machine gun fire, the Battalion cleared WERBELN by 1430 hours.

At 1515 hours the battalion commander received an order to attack SCHAFFHAUSEN that day. The 1st and 2nd Platoons of Company "B", 778th Tank Battalion were attached to the battalion.

The plan for attack was for Company "G" to attack astride the WERBELN-SCHAFFHAUSEN road, with Company "F" on its right. Company "E" was in reserve. The 284th F A Battalion was to support the attack. Artillery preparations of time fire lasting fifteen minutes were to precede the infantry attack by fifteen minutes, shifting to the forward edges of SCHAFFHAUSEN at 1630 hours and lifting at 1635. 81 mm mortar fire was to be placed 200 yards in front of friendly troops all the way

into the objective. The 1st platoon of tanks was to move to the south-east and neutralize two known fortifications (PTS A&B) and then support the attack of Company "F". The 2nd Platoon of tanks was to initially cover the 1st Platoon and then support Company "G" in clearing their portion of the town. The tank attack was to precede the infantry attack by 10 minutes or at 1620.

The artillery fires and the tank attacks began as scheduled. The two fortifications were neutralized by the 1st Platoon of tanks. Companies "F" and "G" attacked at 1630 hours using marching fire and assaulted for a distance of one thousand yards. The enemy small arms fire was neutralized by their own fire, their supporting fires, and by the tanks that followed them into the objective.

The western edge of SCHAFFHAUSEN was cleared by 1645 hours with the only casualties so far being those that resulted in an enemy artillery concentration as the leading elements entered SCHAFFHAUSEN. The majority of the other artillery fires had been placed on the tanks. Seventy-two Germans were captured in the trench system. This ended the marching fire portion of the operation. (15,1)

Again, as in the example of the 3rd Battalion, 10th Infantry Regiment, the extreme distance at which the 2nd Battalion, 378th Infantry initiated its assault with the use of marching fire must be noted. It would be well to recall two of the purposes in the employment of marching fire. Fire power and shock action. Although two companies can put out a lot of fire power, it is doubtful whether the fire power is really effective at extreme ranges. This coupled with the fact that shock action is nil when the line commences firing a distance of a thousand yards from the objective with five minutes neutralization fires on the objective, leads the author to believe that the marching fire was not well coordinated with the support available.

We must not forget that the most crucial period of time during which marching fire is being employed is that period during which the bulk of the supporting fires are shifting to another target. A marching fire unit that fails to give or to continue to give the enemy the full force of its fire power at this instance is at a distinct disadvantage. The marching fire unit that has positioned itself at such a distance from the objective that its fires are not effective when the supporting fires shift, is likewise at the disadvantage.

From the example of the 2nd Battalion it must be assumed that during the five minutes that the artillery fired on the objective that the two companies could not have possibly moved close enough to the objective to make the marching fire effective. It must be assumed that the 81 mm mortar fire preceding the line confused the enemy to such a degree that he did not fire back.

What is this relation between the supporting fires and the infantry unit using marching fire? It is awful close. It has to be. They go hand in hand. We know that our doctrine is to launch assaults from a distance normally less than a 150 yards. Our assaulting troops have to get as close to the objective as is safely possible, before the supporting fires are shifted in order that the punch from marching fire will continue to neutralize the enemy, or kill him. (11,7) The fire must be both in volume and accurate.

We say lean into your fires, but how close can you get to your own fires before you are more of a liability than an asset to your unit. The chart listed below is figured from the maximum effective range of the weapons listed, when supporting assaulting troops. The figures indicate four range probable errors and will vary with the terrain, powder charge used, and meteorological conditions. Exact figures should be worked out by the fire support representatives of the unit which is

supporting marching fire. (11,8)

<u>WEAPON</u>	<u>Four Probable Errors (Approx.)</u> <u>Safe Distance From Objective (11,8)</u>
105mm How	120 yds
4.2 Mort	135 yds
81mm Mort	100 yds
60mm Mort	60 yds

The results obtained by the 2nd Battalion, 378th Infantry cannot justifiably be credited solely to marching fire. It is not hard to speculate that had the enemy been more aggressive, since the timing was poor between the supporting fires and assault element, that reaching the edge of SCHAFFHAUSEN could have been quite costly for the 2nd Battalion.

## CONCLUSIONS

Marching fire cannot generally gain the fire superiority necessary to effectively take an objective without resulting in an undue number of casualties. The fact that marching fire is but a contribution to fire superiority is the basis for this conclusion. To attempt to use marching fire and expect the enemy to always go down merely because you are putting a volume of accurate fire on them, will generally result in what happened to the main body of the 1st Battalion, 517th Infantry.

Some supporting fires have to be put on the enemy so that he'll remain down until your fire is effective. Remember that the enemy's doctrine in the defense doesn't require him to stay down and if he doesn't stay down he'll shoot back. Fire support and marching fire overlap to the extent that the enemy doesn't know when the former ends and the latter commences. All weapons must be utilized in such a way to give the enemy just this impression.

Psychologically marching fire gives the attacker the advantage over the defender. All of the known quantities are on the side of the attacker. He knows where he is going, what he is going to do, how much fire support he has, when his marching fire starts, and when his supporting fires end. He can see the rest of his unit. He might be afraid but his attention is directed towards killing the enemy. (17,7)

The enemy on the other hand has lost his freedom of action to the extent that it is suicide of him to do anything except remain down in his foxhole.

The key to success in using marching fire is the timely initiation of marching fire. Although this closely allies the first conclusion, it is important enough to be conclusive itself. The marching fire unit



leader must have a plan to ensure that after he has come sufficiently close to the objective (less than 150 yards) that there is not a lapse of time where there are no fires on the objective. The supporting fires must be controlled by the person who can best judge their effectiveness. That is generally the leader of the marching fire unit.

Control of the marching fire unit should be planned for all eventualities, yet be simple and understood by all, especially by subordinate leaders. Since the leader is going to depend to such a great degree upon his subordinate leaders, he is going to want to ensure that he has a means of transferring his thoughts into their actions. It has already been brought out that word of mouth is not enough.

At the same time the leader wants to ensure that all of his subordinates react to his control measures. These measures must be planned to such a degree that they border on SOP. The speed with which marching fire accomplishes the mission will depend on how well the control measures direct the efforts of the unit.

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