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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY G, 395TH INFANTRY (99TH
DIVISION) IN THE REDUCTION OF A FORTIFIED POSITION
OF THE SIEGFRIED LINE, WEST OF SCHLEIDEN, GERMANY,
14-15 DECEMBER 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY COMPANY ATTACKING
A FORTIFIED POSITION IN A HEAVILY WOODED TERRAIN.

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AGO MICROFILM

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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY G, 395TH INFANTRY (99TH DIVISION) IN THE REDUCTION OF A FORTIFIED POSITION OF THE SIEGFRIED LINE, WEST OF SCHLEIDEN, GERMANY, 14-15 DECEMBER 1944 (RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph depicts the actions of Company G, 395th Infantry Regiment, 99th Division and of the individuals of the company who were included in the organization of an assault detachment which was employed in the reduction of a fortified position west of SCHLEIDEN, GERMANY, during the period 14-15 December 1944.

The early days of December witnessed major changes in the disposition of units of the United States V Corps to permit the support of and to make possible offensive action in the sector of the ROER DAMS area. (1)

The 99th Division on 12 December 1944 held defensive positions extending from MONSCHAU, GERMANY, in the north to the corps southern boundary in the BUCHHOLZ FOREST, astride the BELGIUM and GERMAN border. (See Map A) (2)

The 395th Infantry was disposed defensively from north to south with the 3rd Battalion in the HOFEN, GERMANY, area, 2nd Battalion in front of KALTERHERBERG, GERMANY, and the 1st Battalion on the regiments right, southeast of KALTERHERBERG.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The mission of the 99th Division in the December offensive

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- (1) A-2, p. 96
(2) A-2, p. 97

action was to participate in the V Corps offensive by conducting its operations under the same orders effecting the 2nd Division by attacking on the right flank of and in conjunction with the 2nd Division on 13 December to seize successively:

"(1) The vicinity of the road junction northwest of ARENBERG.

(2) The ridge southwest of the road junction west of SCHENSEIFFEN.

(3) The HARPERSCHIED-SCHENESIFFEN area and the DREIBORN area.

(4) HERHAHN-MORSBACH area.

(5) A large area including the nose north of DREIBORN, the vicinity of WELLSEIFFEN and the important URFTTALSPERRE Dam." (See Map A) (3)

The 395th Infantry was assigned the mission of attacking in conjunction with the 2nd Division while the 393rd and 394th Regiments for the most part remained on their defensive positions.

Opposing the 99th Division in its zone of action were German units consisting of, from north to south, the 277th Field Replacement Battalion, the 991st Infantry Regiment and the 2nd Battalion of the 294th Infantry Regiment. (See Map B)

The enemies attitude in the entire sector during the period 9 December to 12 December had been and continued to be too stubborn to resist any offensive actions. (4)

THE COMPANY

Company G, 395th Infantry as part of the 99th Infantry
(3) A-2, p. 97
(4) A-1, p. 69

Division had been activated at Camp Van Doo, Mississippi, in the closing days of 1942, moved to Camp Maxey, Texas, in 1943 and sailed from the Zone of Interior on 29 September 1944. The month of October 1944 was spent in ENGLAND.

Filler replacements of the company had been made up of those men who had been effected by the cut-back of the ASTP program. Contrary to initial concern as to the probable attitude of these men on being released from the program, these men had made strenuous efforts to absorb in the minimum amount of time the training program in effect and to make the best possible soldiers.

G Company made its combat debut in World War II on occupying defensive positions in the generally considered "quiet" KALTERHERBERG, GERMANY, sector on 9 November 1944.

The defensive area assigned the Company had permitted a portion of the company being quartered in houses in KALTERHERBERG while the remainder were out on position. Thus continual rotation of the men could be effected.

With the exception of a few discomforts incident to the winter and a limited number of patrol skirmishes with the enemy, little action of any magnitude had taken place up until 18 December 1944.

Casualties, which had been extremely limited, were chiefly of the non-battle variety with the exception of a number of "shoe" anti-personnel mine cases being sustained incident to the patrolling activity conducted in the sector.

RELIEF FROM DEFENSE

The 395th Infantry (less the 3rd Battalion, which was to

remain on defensive position at HOFEN, GERMANY) was scheduled to effect movement into its assembly areas on 12 December. Early on 12 December motor movement of the 2nd Battalion, 395th Infantry, was initiated from KALTERHERBERG, GERMANY, to assembly areas in the ELSENBORN, BELGIUM sector in preparation for the 13 December offensive.

12 December was a particularly nasty day. Considerable snow had fallen and continued to come down. The wind was sharp and strong, adding greatly to everyone's intense discomfort.

Vehicles were forced to proceed at reduced rates of speed with a large share of the time being devoted to keeping vehicles out of or getting them out of ditches.

DISPOSITION OF THE BATTALION

The 2nd Battalion, 395th Infantry, (less Company F attached to the 102nd Cavalry Group and on defense at LAMMERSDORF, GERMANY) closed into its assembly area during the late afternoon of 12 December in preparation for the attack on the following day. (See Map C) (5)

Company E of the 2nd Battalion was attached to the 1st Battalion late on 12 December and subsequently moved off with the 1st Battalion in the initial phase of the attack on 13 December.

The 2nd Battalion less two of its rifle companies, E and F, remained in Regimental reserve during 13 December. Late on 13 December the Battalion displaced some 3 miles forward bringing it up behind the attacking 1st Battalion. (See Map C)

(5) Personal knowledge

THE COMPANY SITUATION

Company G, the remaining rifle unit of the battalion, set up a perimeter defense of the 2nd Battalion area for the night of 13 December.

At approximately 2300 on 13 December the Company Commander of G Company was ordered to report to the Battalion C.P. There he was informed by the Battalion Commander that:

a. E Company would revert to battalion control at daylight of 14 December.

b. The battalion would launch a coordinated attack on 14 December and that the probable zone of commitment would be in the gap existing between the 2nd Division attacking on the left and the 1st Battalion, 395th Infantry on the right.

c. The battalion attack order would be issued at 0700 on 14 December at a point designated by the Battalion Commander.

d. A heavy concrete enemy fortification in the probable zone of attack located on HILL 621, 3000 yards to the front, would ultimately be assigned to G Company for reduction. (See Map C)

e. Assault Detachment equipment would be made available to G Company that night i. e. flame throwers, bangalore torpedoes, demolition charges and other items of a similar nature.

f. F Company would revert to and be available to the 2nd Battalion on 14 or 15 December.

The Company Commander of G Company returned to the Com-

pany C. P. and with the Executive Officer and Platoon Leader of the 1st Platoon (who was to command the assault detachment) planned and discussed in as much detail as possible the probable actions for the coming day. No information of the enemy was available from battalion.

Assault equipment was made available to Company G at about 0330 on 14 December, immediately checked and preparations for the day completed as much as they could be in the light of known facts.

THE BATTALION ATTACK PLAN

At 0645 on the morning of 14 December, the Company Commanders of E and G arrived at the previously designated point to receive the battalion attack order. Company G had been left under the control of the Executive Officer who was preparing the Company for immediate movement.

At approximately 0715 the Battalion Commander arrived in the area he had designated on the night of 13 December and issued the following "fragmentary" attack order.

Speaking to the two company commanders the Battalion Commander stated that, "they knew what he wanted and that they should go get 'em." (6)

Having issued these somewhat limited instructions the Battalion Commander immediately removed himself towards the rear.

The two, to say the least startled, company commanders concerned, as soon as they could recover from the shock of the all too obvious, and with the aid of a few cigarettes, reached

(6) Personal knowledge

the conclusion that if the 1st Battalion were going to receive any assistance from the 2nd Battalion they would have to take the initiative on their own.

The plan devised and agreed on by E and G Company Commanders was that:

a. E Company would continue the attack from its presently held positions to the left of the 1st Battalion against comparatively light resistance of 13 December in an effort to relieve the left assault company of the 1st Battalion that had sustained terrific casualties on 13 December.

b. G Company would move forward behind E and echelon to the left rear and protect the left flank and rear of the battalion.

c. Upon reaching a creek some 1500-2000 yards to the front, if not forced to do so sooner, G Company would commit itself in the gap to the left of E Company and the right of the 2nd Division. It was calculated that by doing so G Company would be in a logical position to launch an assault on the fortified position on HILL 621, previously mentioned by the Battalion Commander on the night of 13 December as a target of the battalion.

MOVEMENT TO THE FORWARD ATTACK AREA AND FINAL PREPARATIONS

In accordance with the attack plan G Company moved out of its Regimental Reserve area of the night of 13 December at approximately 0830 on the morning of 14 December.

The company closed into its forward attack area at approximately 0945. (See Map C)

Individual rolls and excess equipment were dropped.

Those who had not eaten their C rations earlier did so at this time.

The Company command net was checked.

Weapons and ammunition received attention, and final preparations completed.

Attempt to establish a radio contact with battalion was unsuccessful.

The company had not received any communication from battalion headquarters since the issuance of the "attack order" earlier in the day.

The only means of communication available to the company relative to contact with higher headquarters was by means of messengers. In view of this situation information which involved other than E and G Companies was completely lacking.

No information of the enemy was available.

G Company was up to about 85% strength and in spite of the cold and obviously vague situation moral had not been adversely effected to any great degree.

The zone of action of the Company was heavily wooded rolling ground with little undergrowth, covered by about a foot of snow.

Fields of fire up to 200-300 yards were excellent.

The weather had moderated somewhat from the previous 72 hours.

One full C ration was issued.

The officers and NCO's completed their last minute checking and prepared to move their units forward on command.

NARRATION

INITIATION TO OFFENSIVE ACTION

Company G, 395th Infantry Regiment moved out of its forward attack area at 1030 on the morning of 14 December 1944.

(See Map C)

The formation assumed was 1st Platoon, Company Command Group, 3rd Platoon, 1st Platoon of Company H (attached), Weapons Platoon, remainder of Company Headquarters, and the 2nd Platoon.

Following Company E at a distance of two to three hundred yards and echeloned to the left rear the leading elements of Company G covered the movement forward of a unit which was engaging in its first offensive action against the enemy.

The roughness of the terrain covered by snow impeded movement so as to reduce the rate of advance considerable.

The air was cold and crisp, moral high.

Following a month of defending a commonly known weak sector these "green" comparatively untried troops were anxious to create a position for themselves in the hall of Combat Infantrymen.

The company moved forward under the protection of flank patrols, each element maintaining its assigned distances.

After proceeding approximately 1500 unopposed yards small arms fire broke out in the direction of advance of E Company.

Shortly thereafter the Company Commander, radio man and runner of G Company worked forward to the halted leading elements of the company.

The 1st Platoon had advanced to a position astride a small creek with its leading elements part way up the very steep reverse slope of a high hill. A hasty check proved that this was the point at which G Company would move to the left flank of E Company and that the hill the leading elements was on was apparently HILL 621, the one on which the enemy fortified position was supposed to be located.

At this time, approximately 1130, enemy artillery and mortar fire began to fall on that portion of the company which was strung out on the forward slope and top of the hill to the rear of the 1st Platoon.

Believing that the steepness of HILL 621 would afford protection from the artillery fire, the Company Commander ordered the remainder of the company forward as rapidly as possible to occupy temporary defensive positions in close proximity to the ground being held by the 1st Platoon.

Heavy, but ineffective enemy machine gun fire was being directed against the left flank of G Company from the head of a draw 500-600 yards to the left front in the gap between the left flank of the company and the 2nd Division.

The 1st Platoon on moving to the left of E Company when E had become engaged had inadvertently created a gap of from 200 to 250 yards between it and positions being held by E Company.

The 3rd Platoon of G on successfully completing the crossing of the creek and gaining the protection of HILL 621 was committed in this gap on the companies right flank to close it.

The remainder of the company plus its attachments was

moved up behind the two forward platoons. (See Map D)

Enemy artillery and mortar fire which had continued to fall was now having little effect on the company because the hill to the front did mask the slope.

Shortly thereafter the enemy artillery and mortar fire lifted.

Enemy machine gun fire from the left flank however, did continue, but still with little effect.

E Company on the right was being subjected to heavy small arms fire.

Contact with battalion by SCR 300 could not be established.

The situation other than G and E Companies immediate sector was entirely unknown. Information was unavailable as to the progress of the 2nd Division on the left nor of the 1st Battalion on the right flank of the 2nd Battalion.

For all practical purposes, there was nothing in rear of the company.

According to calculations of G Company Commander, the fortified position which was to be eliminated was not more than 500-600 yards to the immediate front on the high ground of HILL 621.

Observation to the front from the company position was limited because of the hills, military crest and the very heavy woods, which furnished excellent concealment.

Sending a runner to Battalion Headquarters to inform them of the situation, positions of the company were consolidated, digging in initiated, and preparations completed for the dis-

patching of a scouting patrol against the position to the front.

RECONNAISSANCE

1st Lt. Daniel P. Juraschek, of Washington, D. C., who had been awarded the honor of leading the assault detachment as official recognition of his becoming a man on his 21st birthday on the following day (15 December), was designated as Reconnaissance Patrol Leader.

In order to familiarize men of the assault detachment with the actual terrain surrounding the fortified position the patrol was made up of men that would be included in the formation of the detachment.

Also included in the patrol were the Artillery F O who would attempt to conduct the necessary registrations to support the attack and the Platoon Leader of the heavy machine guns who would furnish close support to the detachment.

Great care was exercised in selecting the general route to be followed by the patrol. Of a necessity detailed reconnaissance of the actual enemy position could not be planned until such time as the patrol was in a position to ascertain to what degree their movements would be restricted by retaliatory enemy activities.

Following in the path of lead scout, PFC Felix X. Clark of Brooklyn, New York, the patrol cautiously moved out of the company area at 1430 to in part:

- a. Locate and pin point the fortification.
 - b. Determine the types and depth of passive defense measures, paying particular attention to protective and tac-
-

tical wire.

c. Locate and determine the number and sector of firing embrasures that would have to be considered in the assault of the position.

d. Determine the types and locations of enemy field fortifications supporting the concrete box.

e. Locate and determine the type of any mine fields.

By 1700 the patrol had worked its way back to the Company position and although being subjected to sporadic enemy machine gun fire the patrol had been remarkably successful in obtaining essential information on the fortification which was:

a. The position had been pin-pointed about 400 yards over the military crest, on the high ground of the hill that the company was disposed on. (See Map D)

b. The fortification apparently was of the heavy reinforced concrete type.

c. The position was completely wired in with both double apron protective and tactical barb wire entanglements.

d. Two firing embrasures would have to be silenced in the reduction of the position.

e. The ground completely around the position was prepared with dug in positions but apparently were not being manned during the time the position was under the observation of the patrol. It was apparent to the patrol that if these enemy positions were manned during the attack that they would do much to deny to the assault detachment the probably small sectors of dead space in the two firing embrasures of the concrete emplacement.

It was immediately decided that the remaining hours of daylight would be devoted to the completion of the attack plans for the reduction of the position. A tentative time for the assault of the position was established for 1100 on the following day.

Following detailed deliberations, taking into consideration the information brought back by the patrol, the organization of the assault detachment determined on was as follows:

- a. The Assault Detachment Leader.
- b. The Assistant Detachment Leader.
- c. 2 Demolition Men, each carrying 15 pounds of high explosives.
- d. 2 Wire-cutting Men, each carrying one section of Bangalore torpedo.
- e. 2 Flame-thrower Men, each carrying a flame-thrower.
- f. 2 Riflemen, each carrying 1 spare section of Bangalore torpedo.
- g. 2 Assistant Flame-thrower Men.
- h. One Platoon of Heavy Machine Guns.
- i. One Section of Light Machine Guns.

In addition to their individual arms and detachment equipment each man also was to carry a limited supply of hand grenades.

THE NIGHT PRIOR TO THE ASSAULT

A gap of approximately 100 yards still existed between E and G Companies but was effectively blocked by a well laid enemy mine field of "Bouncing Betties" anti-personnel mines.

Contact with the 2d Division on the 1st had never been gained and the extent of the existing gap was not known.

All attempts to establish other than messenger contact with Battalion Headquarters had met with dismal failure.

A friendly artillery concentration during the late afternoon of 14 December had been brought down on E Company causing great damage. Information obtained later on from personnel of Battalion Headquarters indicated that this concentration had been called for by the Battalion Commander without being called for by either of the assault companies and in spite of the fact battalion could not have known locations of the companies. (7)

The E Company Commander, Captain Richard E. Hornby of Trenton, N. J., had been hit and the company was being led by the Executive Officer.

No information was available as to the situation of the 1st Battalion.

Cold C rations once again constituted the evening meal.

Resupply of water was accomplished by sending carrying parties to the rear with loads of canteens.

By 1800 the company had dug in as well as the ground would permit, solid rock was encountered anywhere from one to two feet down.

At about 2300 enemy artillery began to register on the position causing considerable damage because the enemy apparently was firing into the tree tops and trunks thereby obtaining the same effect as time fire.

Shortly prior to daylight the enemy releases a surprise

(7) Personal knowledge

counterattack which was repulsed with a minimum of effort.

The enemy had not displayed much aggressiveness during the action, withdrawing quickly after being engaged. No casualties were sustained.

It appeared that the reverse-slope defense that the company had assumed had the enemy confused as to the units exact location and intent.

DAY OF ASSAULT

Daylight seemed to ease the slightly tensed nerves of the night. Information relative to E Company being shelled by friendly artillery unfortunately had passed on throughout the company. This information coupled with the absence of battalion control or influence had created an unhealthy mental state in the men.

Once again C rations were consumed.

Communications with Battalion Headquarters was still limited to foot messengers.

Battalion Headquarters it was learned from returning messengers was located roughly 2500 yards to the right rear of the two assault companies.

It was further learned that F Company had reverted to battalion control and had been placed in position to protect the Battalion C. P.

The A and P Platoon of Battalion Headquarters Company was being continuously employed in logging in the Battalion C. P.

On checking the company positions the Company Commander found PFC Clark who had acted as scout on the reconnaissance

patrol of the preceding day, lying on the ground outside of his fox hole.

Further investigation revealed that Clark had been hit by artillery fire during the night. However, he requested that he be permitted to remain with the company to complete his assignment as one of the Demolitions Men of the assault detachment before being evacuated.

His request was granted.

Particular mention is made of this incident in view of the part PFC Clark played in the ultimate success of the assault detachment.

Plans for the assault in part included:

a. That the assault detachment would move forward to reduce the position at 1100. (See Map D)

b. That the Company Command Group would move up with the assault detachment to a point from which the entire operation could be under direct observation. (See Map D)

c. That the support platoon of the company, the 2nd Platoon, would move up behind the assault detachment taking up a position securing the left flank of the zone in addition to being in a position to furnish any additional support required by the attacking elements. (See Map D)

d. The remainder of the company was to remain on the alert under the direct control of the Company Executive Officer in its present position, prepared to move out on orders. (See Map D)

e. Radio contact in addition to visual contact would be maintained between the assault detachment Leader and the Company O. P.

At approximately 1100 the assault detachment led by Lt. Jurashek cautiously inched its way forward through the heavy woods surrounding the enemy position reaching their previously selected assault positions under cover of the woods. (See Map D)

On signal from the Detachment Leader the artillery Forward Observer called for the previously registered concentration on the enemy position to force the defenders to "button up" their fighting embrasures while the two sections of heavy machine guns, one section to each embrasure, effected their move into previously selected firing positions.

The concentration was on the target, effectively neutralizing the fire of the fortification.

Immediately, retaliatory enemy artillery fire commenced coming in. However, because of the mask created by the hill the fortification was on, the shells passed a few yards overhead and burst 100-200 yards to the rear of the assault detachment.

The supporting artillery fire of the assault unit was lifted and the detachment waited tensely for the heavy machine guns to take up their mission of keeping the firing embrasures of the "pill box" buttoned up while the detachment breached the wire and moved in. Machine gun fire broke out from the "box"; a hasty check with the Detachment Commander revealed that the attached heavy machine guns had not had sufficient time to go into position.

The Artillery F. O. was instructed to repeat the concentration.

This time the machine guns were successful in reaching their positions and immediately took up rapid fire as soon as the artillery support lifted. (See Map D)

No enemy movement had been observed in the open trenches surrounding the fortification and no direct fire was being received from other than the firing embrasures of the fortification. (See Map D)

PFC Spencer, was now snaking himself forward pushing two assembled sections of Bangalore torpedoes across the snow in front of him. Finally reaching the double apron barb wire he slid the charge under the wire, pulled the fuse lighter and quickly dove for cover.

Both sections of heavy machine guns were forced to fire at their sustained rates of fire in order to force the defenders to keep their firing embrasures closed.

The section of light machine guns had gotten into position effectively covering the left flank, also being in position to support an emergency. (See Map D)

One, then two minutes went by and then it was realized that the Bangalore torpedo was a "dud". Once again PFC Spencer, this time on his own initiative, wormed his way forward under cover of the machine guns. Quickly refusing the charge Spencer again ignited the fuse and once more made a hasty withdrawal.

This time the protective wire was breached with a roar and the Assault Detachment poured through the gap.

At this time small arms fire broke out against the left flank of the company but was quickly silenced by the 2nd Platoon which had moved up into position covering that flank.
(See Map D)

The Assault Detachment had now reached their assigned positions close into the enemy emplacement working themselves into the slight dead spaces 15 to 20 yards from the corner of the fortification between the two firing embrasures.

Both of the flame-thrower men had worked their way as far forward as possible and were in excellent positions to cover the Demolitions Charge men in the all important task of placing their charges in the embrasures.

The machine guns continued to do a most effective job of keeping down the fire from the "box" itself.

Both flame-thrower men were working frantically to get their equipment into operation to blind the defenders of the emplacement.

Precious seconds passed and still neither of the flame-throwers were in operation.

PFC Felix X. Clark realizing that the situation was critical and without the all important protective cover of the flame-throwers, entirely on his own initiative, rushed forward into the hail of machine gun fire ricocheting off the concrete emplacement, placed his charge against the right embrasure and quickly dove for cover.

Seconds later there was an ear splitting roar, the position had been breached by the blowing in of the embrasure.

Quickly enemy defenders came pouring out of the rear of the emplacement hands in the air.

Hastily rounding up the enemy survivors two of the detachment members started them moving to the rear while the remainder of the detachment finished cleaning out the fortification.

PFC Clark in assisting in the removal of the prisoners from the emplacement area stepped into an unnoticed anti-personnel mine field and was instantly killed.

The detachment immediately placed out the necessary security to cover the reorganization of the position.

Reduction of the position had been effected by approximately 1230.

Enemy wire communications were still in operation to the fortification and excited German voices could be heard trying wildly to establish communications with the position.

It was decided to sever these communications and five minutes later the Germans began an intense artillery shelling of the position, directly onto the "box" itself. This continued for some time but finally lifted.

The security which the detachment had placed outside of the concrete emplacement was subjected to a terrific shelling but could not be withdrawn into the "box" for fear of being counterattacked.

The shells bursting on the box itself had no effect on the detachment.

The remainder of the company was now moved forward to positions supporting the fortified position which it had been discovered enjoyed one firing embrasure to the rear which covered a limited sector of the ground in that direction and made a formidable contribution to the strength of the company position.

A messenger was dispatched to Battalion Headquarters informing them of the situation.

An inspection of the fortified installation showed that the satchel charge placed by PFC Clark had torn the steel embrasure door off of the guides thereby effectively breaching the position.

The installation had five large rooms separated by steel doors, the walls were from three to four feet in thickness. The steel rear door could be reached only after a zig-zag course through concrete corridors.

The two embrasures which had faced the assault detachment effectively covered the entire sector through which the assault had been made.

The two 105 howitzer concentrations which had been fired on the position in support of assault detachment had succeeded in knocking out a small number of pieces of concrete about half as large as the average hand.

The assaulting force had sustained two killed.

The enemy had sustained two killed and 13 captured.

Battalion Headquarters had not as yet established contact with G Company but on being advised by the company of its success sent forward a man from the S-2 section to sketch the fortification.

G Company had by this time been out of contact with Battalion Headquarters since approximately 0800 the preceding day. During that time no information had been furnished or any control exercised over the Company by Battalion Headquarters.

To sum up the results of this action: The assault detachment of G Company, 395th Infantry, did succeed in reduc-

ing, in commendable fashion, the fortified position in the zone of action.

The importance of the action as contributing to the ultimate success of the Company or of the Battalion was never to be known as the enemy initiated its counteroffensive in the ARDENNES on the following day, 16 December, bringing to a grinding halt the December offensive of the V Corps.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. COMMUNICATIONS WITH HIGHER HEADQUARTERS

The lack of adequate means of communication with Battalion Headquarters was a serious handicap throughout the entire operation. Important information as to the progress of units on the right and left could not be obtained for possible influence on the actions of the company. There was almost no information that could be passed on to the men who in spite of their fine spirit finally became uneasy at the all too obvious lack of information and non support of Battalion Headquarters. The company was limited in the action it could take to determine the extent of the gap on its left for fear of getting out in front of and being fired on by friendly forces. The tactical situation did not seem to support or justify Battalion Headquarters being out of communications with one of its assault units for a period of over 36 hours. The total distance that the company moved forward from its forward attack area was a distance of approximately only 2000 yards and it would appear that even wire could have been laid to the Company.

2. SUPPLY

The operation throughout its entire duration was almost entirely unsupported logistically. From the time that the company had moved forward on 13 December and up to and including the evening meal on the 15th of December subsistence had been entirely on C rations when the situation would have permitted the feeding of at least four hot meals, if nothing more than heated C rations and a hot drink being sent forward. Carrying parties with canteens went to the rear for water rather than water supply being effected from rear to front.

3. ENEMY ACTIVITIES

For some reason the enemy had not manned the field fortifications surrounding the concrete fortified position, thereby failing to provide himself ground protection outside of the concrete emplacement itself. If he had done so there remains little doubt as to the increased effort that would have been demanded of the attacking forces.

4. INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVE AND ACTIONS

During two phases of the actual assault of the detachment there were two mishaps which could have possibly resulted in the complete failure of the operation:

a. The first of these when the Bangalore torpedo failed to detonate on the first ignition. The situation was quickly corrected simply because of the timely actions and initiative of the Wire-cutting Man, in re-fusing and re-igniting the charge.

b. The second of these when the flame-throwers

equipment failed to operate. This critical situation was counter-acted only by the heroic actions of PFC Clark in his carrying out his assigned mission in spite of the lack of covering fire from the flame-throwers.

Although the flame-throwers had been tested on the night of 13 December they had not been checked for test firing from that time until they failed at the critical stage of the assault on 15 December. Undoubtedly they should have been checked prior to the assault detachments movement out of the company area.

5. RECONNAISSANCE

Although the reconnaissance against the enemy position had produced essential information it was faulty in at least one respect. The anti-personnel mine field in which PFC Clark was killed surrounded the entire positions front. This mine field was of such a nature that it should have been discovered by the patrol. Apparently the field had been laid when the ground was soft and contained much moisture. What had neutralized its normal effectiveness was the weather which had frozen the mine field up to such a point that the mines did not detonate readily. If the field had been totally effective the assault detachment would have suffered additional casualties, delayed or possibly stopped.

6. ARTILLERY

The two 105 concentrations had little if any effect on the concrete emplacement itself. No doubt the concentrations would have been of valuable assistance in keeping down and

causing casualties of enemy defenders had they occupied the positions outside of the "pill box". However, it is felt that with a determined enemy manning the machine guns of the concrete emplacement that these concentrations would not have forced the defenders to button up.

However it is believed that the present recoilless 57's and 75's would be of immense value on this type of operation.

7. ENEMY FIGHTING EFFICIENCY

A check of the inside of the concrete emplacement showed that the automatic weapons of the two frontal firing embrasures commanded the entire approach zone of the assault detachment except for a small dead space close into the box at the corner between the two openings. Manned by determined well trained personnel any assault detachment such as the one employed against it would have a great deal more difficulty reducing the position than had been encountered.

LESSONS

1. In order for a unit to function properly it is essential that the next higher headquarters make every possible effort to maintain the available means of communications.
2. To properly maintain the fighting efficiency of an organization it is advisable that hot food when at all possible be fed the troops, resupply of items such as water should normally be from rear to front.
3. To properly defend a fortified position field fortifications outside and on the ground must be prepared and manned.
4. There is no substitute for individual initiative.

5. Reconnaissance must be as thorough as time and the enemy activity will permit.

6. Supporting weapons of the type and caliber to properly accomplish the mission must be furnished the offensive elements.

7. The strength of a position is not dependent alone on the thickness of the walls and armament but also finds its resistive powers in the personnel manning same.