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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 2ND BATTALION, 39TH INFANTRY
(9TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON D'HORN,
GERMANY, 4 - 10 DECEMBER 1944
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)

(Personal Experience of an assistant member on the Battalion Staff)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY BATTALION IN THE ATTACK

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Wpms
Tactics

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INTRODUCTION

The action which this monograph is to cover; that of the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry, 9th Infantry Division during the period 4 - 10 December 1944 as witnessed by an assistant member of the Battalion Staff, brings out several principles and small points concerning matters in planning and execution which ordinarily do not come to light. Usually they are passed over lightly and very few people ever give them a second thought.

The attack which actually took place on the 10th December was the first of a three day attack period and as far as the majority of men were concerned it was just one of many made by the battalion. Their aim was to get to the little town, which was the objective, alive and in one piece. The officers, had the same idea, only there was more to it because their's was the problem of giving the men who did the fighting the benefit of their knowledge in the use of various means and aids which were available to assist them in accomplishing this feat. What is referred to in particular here is the use of tactics, formations, supplies, attachments, and most important of all the use of supporting weapons.

It is the last of the items mentioned above that played such a big factor in this particular action. All the others entered into it but this was by far and large the most important; in fact the use of these supporting weapons and attachments is the main lesson to be brought out in this monograph.

THE GENERAL SITUATION

To bring the reader into the situation of the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry and see where, when, and under what conditions this particular action took place, let us first glance at the situation of the 1st United States Army as it existed on 4th December 1944. (See Map A)

Sentence structure

The progress of the American forces had cleared France, most all of Belgium, and had brought themselves face to face with the German fortification system known as the Seigfried Line. This had been penetrated in a number of places along the front, (1) but due to a lack of supplies the ^{troops} (full force) of the American Armies, 1st and 3rd, had come to a halt. Outfits could not move-- gas, tires, artillery ammunition, and other articles were rationed. Nothing could be done but wait till the supply lines across FRANCE had time to get reorganized and have the supplies built up again. (2)

The next thing we will consider is the condition of the troops on the front line. The long and fast chase across FRANCE had been followed by the sudden stubborn resistance of the Germans as our forces reached his homeland, GERMANY proper. Here the German was now defending not a conquered and subjected territory, but his own land and home. This along with the prepared defenses that the community workers had built, ^{forced} (made) our troops ^{to} fight three times as hard to gain just a few yards of ground. This situation had shown its effect on the fighting men in the front lines. These men were tired, very tired. Thus the 1st Army had come to almost a complete halt with units exceedingly under strength and badly needing rest. The 1st Army at this time comprised the VII Corps, the V Corps and the VIII Corps, all on line running from North to South in that order. (3) This particular zone had taken in (1) the famed HUERTGEN FOREST area, (2) the town of AACHEN which Hitler had made a main strong point and (3) the ARDENNES FOREST area which had the strong SEIGFRIED LINE running through it. To the front was the ROER and URFT rivers beyond which lay DUREN and the COLOGNE plain. (4)

To narrow the front down to units of interest let us look at the V, and VII Corps. The VII Corps, comprised of the 104th Division, 1st Division and 4th Division, had advanced in a corps attack to a line which ran from the West of LUCHEM South through LANGERWEHE. (See Map B) (5)

(1) A-2, p. 84; ((2) A-2, p. 93; (3) A-2, p. 71; (4) Personal knowledge; (5) A-2, p. 85.

The V Corps composed of combat command R, 5th Armored Division, 8th Infantry Division, 102nd Cavalry Group, and 99th Infantry Division from North to South in that order held the line HUERTGEN, MONSCHAU, HOFEN, and East of KRINKELT. (6) The 5th Armored Division and 9th Infantry Division were in Corps reserve and under 1st Army control for possible employment in the VII Corps zone. These dispositions were as of the 4th December 1944. (7)

The 9th Infantry Division, minus the 47th Infantry Regiment was in V Corps reserve located at CAMP EISENBORN, BELGIUM. They had been here since the 14th of November when they had been relieved from the line by elements of the 99th Division. (8) The 39th Infantry, a regiment of the 9th Division, had bivouaced in the EISENBORN FOREST and immediately gone into intensive training. Each battalion during this period submitted training schedules each week covering all the basic subjects. Problems on squad, platoon, and company levels were conducted, along with numerous conditioning road marches. Among other activities, were the appearance of several Red Cross Donut Dugouts, movies, ceremonies at which decorations were awarded, and by far the most enjoyable, showers and clean clothes.

During this period of inactivity as far as fighting goes, there were no casualties and on the other hand there was a decided increase in personnel due to the returning "Purple Hearters". Company morning reports showed unheard of figures in the "present for duty" column for a line outfit. Units which before had felt over-strength when they showed 125 for duty now were up to T/O and then some.

The fact that these returning soldiers arrived at this time helped considerably, because it gave them a chance to learn the new faces of men who had become integral parts of the units. Also it brushed them up on fighting. The training got them into the right spirit. Thus we see the general background of the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry on the 4th of December, fresh, rested, over-strength and high in morale.

(6) A-4, p. 316 and p. 323; (7) A-2, p. 71 and A-4, p. 316; (8) A-4, p. 307.

Consequently it was not surprising that when the order was received to move back to the old VII Corps and relieve the 1st Division that the general attitude was one of "Let's get this war over with!", instead of the disheartened "Here we go again!" (9)

THE BATTALION SITUATION

The order arrived on 4th December moving the 9th Division back to the VII Corps where they were to go into the line relieving the 1st Division. (10) The 39th Infantry was designated to take over the southern sector which was held by the 26th Infantry. This sector ran from the South edge of LANGERWEHE, ^{thence} South for about a mile and a half along the eastern edge of some woods.

About 0700 hours the advance party of the 39th Infantry left from CAMP ELSENBORN and went to the 26th command post in the vicinity of SCHLOSS LAUFENBURG. There the situation was outlined to the group, as to the enemy and the 26th Infantry troops. It was not a very attractive one. On the way up through the woods it was decidedly evident that a terrific fight had taken place. The woods had been leveled off at about a 12 foot height by extremely heavy artillery, dead still lay along the road - - not only German but American. When American dead are still about several days after a fight one knows that the unit there must be in a bad fix. Upon questioning the regimental staff it was learned that the normal strength of each line company was approximately fifty men. (11) That two companies E and F of the 26th Infantry had been cut off and captured in the castle town of MERODE. (12) Further, that since then no effort had been made to get out of the front edge of the woods which over looked the open ground and the towns of SCHLICH, D'HORN, MERODE, and DUREN off on the distant skyline. (13) (See sketch)

After the initial orientation the various battalion groups followed their guides to the respective units they were to relieve. The 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry, party went to the northern end of the ridge and

(9) Personal knowledge; (10) A-5, p. 269; (11) Personal knowledge: Statement made by commanding officer 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry; (12) A-1, p. 103; (13) A-2, p. 85.

there were met by the commanding officer of the 3rd Battalion, 26th Infantry. He seemed very happy that we were there and was exceptionally interested in helping us get in - - anything to hurry the relief. With a casual glance at the condition of the trees one could easily see why he was so interested. They were matchwood.

Initially the 2nd Battalion was to occupy positions in the town of JUNGERSDORF and along the front of the wooded area to the South. But that was changed and the whole 2nd Battalion was to go into JUNGERSDORF. This was decided at about 1130 hours and so the 2nd Battalion was intercepted back on the route of march, halted, and moved off the road awaiting night-fall. (14) (MAR C)

The town of JUNGERSDORF was on the forward slope of an open hill and could not be entered during daylight. Several of the advance party had tried it but were sniped at by a large caliber gun. Thus the idea of trying to personally contact the units in town was temporarily dropped.

When darkness fell E and G Companies moved forward into JUNGERSDORF relieving those units of the 26th Infantry in town. F Company of the 39th Infantry, remained behind in LANGERWEHE.

At 2100 hours all was settled and the 26th Infantry had moved completely, outposts and all. (15)

THE BATTALION PLAN OF ATTACK

On the 7th of December VII Corps issued the order to have the corps attack and over-come all German resistance West of the URFT and ROER rivers. The 104th Division had the objectives along the Northern boundary, the 9th Division had those in the center and the 83rd Division which had relieved the 4th Division had those objectives along the Southern sector. The 9th Division in conjunction with the 3rd Armored division was to take the towns of OBERGEICH, GEICH, ECHTZ, KOZENDORF, D'HORN, SCHLICH, MERODE, and DERICHSWEILER. (See Map C) (16)

(14) A-3, (15) Personal knowledge; (16) A-5, p. 269.

The task which the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry, fell heir to was an odd plan in that they were to attack from JUNGERSDORF after the 60th Infantry had secured the towns of GEICH and OBERGEICH, and seize the small town of D'HORN. This would outflank the German strong point of SCHLICH and MERODE which up to this time had kept the Americans pinned to the edge of the woods at the base of the hill due East of MERODE. The time, a very important factor, would not be before 1200 hours because the 60th Infantry did not start their attack on the GEICHES until 1200 hours. That meant that the 2nd Battalion would attack in broad daylight.

But why should this prove such a big all important factor? Well, linked with the terrain over which the attack was to proceed and looking at it from the German view point it was merely a matter of shooting at sitting ducks on a pond. From the front edge of JUNGERSDORF to the near side of D'HORN was 1700 yards of nothing but slightly slopping grass land, flat, and not one bush any place. To add to the obstacle of being wide open, the ground was extremely soggy. Midway between the two towns was a small ditch system which was a drain and looked extremely soft. It later proved to be too soft.

Thus the panoramic view as seen by the men of Companies E and G for five days prior to the attack did not bolster their morale.

With this situation and the order to attack, Lieutenant Colonel Frank L. Gunn, the 2nd Battalion Commander, went to work studying the terrain and how he could use it to advantage, if possible. (17)

The first worry was that of getting across the open area without any casualties. How? Well, all ideas offered by various members of the battalion staff such as suggestions of smoke, covering fire from small arms, support by artillery, and a few odd ones, were mulled over. After hours a few decisions were made. The first was to start immediately. The 155 Medium Artillery Battalion or larger, if possible, ^{was} were to fire with delay fuze into the area between the two towns. The thought behind this was to dig holes and thus provide the infantry a possible means of (17) Personal knowledge.

Better wording needed.

cover if the Germans halted them out in the open ground. Every one knew that previously artillery was being rationed when it came to ammunition so with that and the fact that you had to have nothing less than a target consisting of a battalion strength of enemy before they would shoot it was figured best to get hot on the plan. Captain Bryant, Battalion Artillery Liaison Officer, did lots of talking and finally got certain Corps Artillery Battalions to shoot several concentrations at D'HORN and then had them moved back into the open area and fire a concentration or two.

With the first part out of the way and in operation, Lieutenant Colonel Gunn drew up the rest of the plan. The battalion would move out with E Company leading and going directly to the objective, D'HORN. At four to five hundred yards G Company would follow. As the latter got about five hundred yards from D'HORN it would move to the left and cross over the railroad fill, then move on into that part of D'HORN to the left of the tracks. F Company which was now located in the town of LANGERWEHE would move to JUNGERSDORF the night before the attack and remain there as battalion reserve. H Company was split up, a section of heavy machine guns would be attached with each attacking company and the remaining platoon of machine guns would set up in JUNGERSDORF and give overhead fire during the attack. (See Map D-1) (18)

The platoon of tanks from Company A, 746th Tank Battalion, which was attached to the 2nd Battalion was assigned the mission of moving out with the lead company. Not behind, but right up with the front platoons.

M

A platoon of Tank Destroyers which were also attached to the 2nd Battalion was assigned the mission of picking covered positions in JUNGERSDORF to which they would move when the attack started and fire on preobserved targets, plus any of opportunity, oddly enough, they were very pleased with this plan and thought it excellent.

Why 81mm?

M

Finally came the use of the supporting artillery, Regimental Cannon Company, and the battalion's own 81mm mortars. On the left flank a rail-

(18) Personal knowledge.

road track ran along the top of a 12 to 20 foot fill which started about 400 yards East of JUNGERSDORF. This furnished excellent protection against both fire and observation from the left flank. However, the objective to the front was wide open and the right flank was not only open but covered by two towns; SCHLICH and MERODE, both held by the Germans, and strongly held, at that! (See Map D-3). It wasn't very hard to determine from this, as to what would be primary targets for us to shoot at, but what kind of fire should be put where? After much discussion with Captain Bryant, and with the 26th Field Artillery Battalion, a plan was arrived at that went as follows:

Work. Working
26 FA Bn. { The towns of D'HORN, SCHLICH and MERODE, would receive time fire initially, at H minus 10 hours, then at H hour smoke would be placed to the North of SCHLICH and MERODE thus concealing any observation from those towns. The time fire on D'HORN was to continue till lifted by the leading attacking company. Then move to a greater range and fire on DERICHSWEILER. ^P The 34th Field Artillery (Med.) Battalion and Regimental Cannon Company were to fire on DERICHSWEILER where it was believed that the Germans had mortar positions. (19)

H Company's 81mm mortars were to initially supplement the artillery fires on SCHLICH and MERODE then be prepared to give support to either attacking company as they got into D'HORN.

These parts of the plan were immediately sent out to the people concerned, with the idea that knowing in advance what was expected they could commence stock piling a little extra ammunition and register. (See Map D-4)

Art. { From here on minor plans and administrative procedures were ironed out. Feeding, issuing extra ammunition and obtaining special grenades, in fact everything was set. Except for H hour a time which would be governed by the attack of the 60th Infantry and elements of the 3rd ^{ARMORED} Army Division on the 2nd Battalion's left

flank . They were to jump-off at 1200 hours and take the two towns of GEICH and OBERGEICH before the 2nd Battalion, 39th Infantry moved. (20)

TIME PRIOR TO THE ATTACK

Every one in the battalion settled down to wait. Plans had been made and all were thoroughly oriented. Nothing was left out. It just could not miss this time. All was fine, the weather cleared and on the 9th of December spirits in the battalion headquarters were high. However, about noon a little incident occurred that was like a spark to tinder. From then on it was one trouble after another.

Sent structure.
The only road from LANGERWEHE to JUNGERSDORF that could be used ran right through a German farm. A big building built around a courtyard, then over the hill and into JUNGERSDORF. This last part was exposed to the enemy and movement over it had been restricted to the time of darkness. (See Map D-1) The Battalion Commanding Officer had personally found this out, back on the 5th of December when he had been sniped at with a rather large gun while trying to make a run for it in his jeep. This one road was the supply route and was to be used to take the tanks and battalion antitank guns over that night. It had to be kept open! So what happens? A 4.2 inch mortar platoon moved in and set up in the farm yard. Digging like fury and getting set to register. Upon questioning it was found that they were to support the 60th Infantry on our left and thought that they had a perfect position. After a short orientation and lesson on the reasons for boundaries the chemical mortars moved out. (21)

Just about time that the battalion staff settled down and drew a sigh of relief a linesman came in and said a half-track was stuck and wanted some help. One of the battalion officers went out to see what could be done. Lo and behold, here was one of the 4.2 inch mortar platoons ammunition carriers, a half-track loaded with ammunition half off the road and in mud two feet deep. This blocked the road again because it was
(20) A-3; (21) Personal knowledge.

only a one way road and the opposite edge was also too muddy for vehicles to operate over. *A* Little deliberation and discussion was followed by getting a tank up and hauling the half-track out. Engineer tape was then put out to help guide the vehicles that night. (22)

sub.
All was quiet till dark except for German artillery, that had kept up continuously for the whole time. Most was destined for friendly artillery one terrain feature back, but there were a surprising number of shorts. At dark troubles started again. About 1930 hours a combat command of the 3rd Armored parked on the main road right outside the battalion command post. A mere 80 vehicles but all seemed to be huddled between where our platoon of tanks ^{was} were and the entrance to our supply road. This group was to stay there till the adjacent attack jumped off the next day. Moving tanks at night under such conditions was not easy but with the combined efforts of all the battalion staff and F Company Officers, it was finally accomplished and all the battalion vehicles and attached tanks got through and into JUNGERSDORF. (23)

Not clear.

Subs working
No sooner had this last little tangle been straightened out than the Battalion Commander returned from a visit to E and G Companies with a Lieutenant from G Company. This Lieutenant would not attack. That was that! It was suicide! He could not make his men attack! Until now he was the best platoon leader in the battalion, had been awarded a Silver Star, and now this. What had happened? Sitting for several days and looking at the open expanse that had to be crossed evidently had worked on his mind. Immediately there was ^{what thought?} the thought: "WHAT ABOUT THE MEN? HOW WILL THEY ACT TOMORROW?" But there was lots to do so after a short talk between the Lieutenant and the Battalion Commander the former was sent to regiment and the battalion battle command post moved into JUNGERSDORF, with F Company and prepared for the next day's operation. (24)

THE ATTACK

For the past several days there ^{had been} ~~was~~ no activity, and rest and hot

(22) Personal knowledge; (23) Personal knowledge; (24) Personal knowledge.

meals had been the vogue. Then came the 10th^{of} December-another clear sunny day. Time passed quickly with every one busy, tinkering around with little odds and ends but still busy, trying to keep their mind off of that open area. At 1200 hours the 60th Infantry with elements of the 3rd Armored Division jumped off toward the GEICHES. It was quite a show from the 2nd Battalion OP. (See Map D-1) The adjacent area to the north could be seen for 2 miles and the whole attack could be observed. A special mine exploder company led the unit of the 60th Infantry nearest our boundary. Its' odd looking tanks with tremendous metal disks being pushed in front of the tank proper, led the way toward GEICH; about half way to the town an antitank gun got a direct hit on the leading ME tanks. This seemed to mark the beginning. From then on the attack slowed and almost halted. Time passed quickly. 1300 hours then 1400 hours about this time every one started to get a little concerned because the 2nd Battalion was to move out after the 60th Infantry got GEICH and OBERGEICH and as it looked from the OP it would be quite sometime before word came saying they had taken the two objectives.

(25)

Along about 1430 to 1450 hours, General Collins, the VII Corps Commander, stopped by the 39th Infantry CP and inquired as to the progress of the attack. When told that the 2nd Battalion was still waiting word from the 60th Infantry he immediately stated that the battalion should move out now and not wait. (26)

After a telephone conversation between Battalion and Regiment time was set for the jump off at 1515 hours. Word went to E and G Companies, tanks, tank destroyers, mortars, and artillery. At 1505 hours the artillery started as planned. (27) D'HORN, SCHLICH and MERODE were well covered, next the smoke started to spread and cover SCHLICH and MERODE. There were minor adjustments of the supporting fires, but on the whole all went perfectly and according to plan.

(25) Personal knowledge; (26) A-5, p. 273; (27) A-3.

Sub-intended

At 1515 hours E Company moved out of JUNGERSDORF as ordered and into the open. With it were the tanks, but only two instead of the four in the platoon. (The fifth, a tank dozer, was left in LANGERWEHE to go via the highway after the objective was taken). The ground had been too soft and two tanks had gotten mired in the first 50 yards in an orchard.

1515 hours not only brought the lead company out but all supporting weapons. Tank destroyers had opened up on the targets designated to them, heavy machine guns of H Company cut loose with overhead fire and mortars were being pushed to their maximum. Although not mentioned before .50 caliber machine guns available in the battalion at the time were also firing. It was learned too that supporting fires were coming from the other two battalions in the regiment and their targets were MERODE and SCHLICH.

E Company had cleared JUNGERSDORF by now and was about half way across the field when a call came over the radio from the artillery: "Smoke is running out; will have to stop shortly." Immediately the Liaison Officer and the Battalion Commander went to work calling every one they knew trying to get more smoke. No matter where they turned they got the same answer, "Sorry." So the artillery cut the density. Luckily the wind was perfect and the smoke drifted the right way, north-west. The Battalion 81s then proved themselves by taking up where the artillery left off. They had gotten all the smoke possible and were able to perform a perfect job. Added to this a platoon of 4.2 inch chemical mortars which were just put in support of this attack helped out. (28)

About this time E Company received enemy mortar fire (See Map E). It seemed to land right in the middle of the company formation. Nothing could be done at the time and the company kept on moving. By now they had crossed the greater part of the ^{open ground?} opening round, behind them and in the field were a number of odds and ends; ^{ant} a mine field of box mines. Due

(28) Personal knowledge.

*not clear
rewording
needed*

to the extreme dampness of the ground these mines did not go off when run over, by the remaining tank; another tank stuck in the mud, a number of casualties waiting litter men, and a group of German prisoners being herded back. This latter group was evidently an outpost group picked up in holes. (29)

*more detail
needed*

By now E Company was nearing the town of D'HORN. From the OP we could see the last tank bog down and stop 400 yards short of the town. (See Map E). Shortly afterwards a call came over the SCR 300 from E Company saying: "Lift the artillery we're moving in." Within a matter of seconds the calls were put in and the air suddenly cleared over the town. The artillery had lifted. The company quickened their pace and moved in on the double. Small arms fire could be heard. The reports that came back were all favorable and within half an hour E Company had cleared the town taking a sizable number of prisoners and organizing to meet any possible counterattack.

*more detail
needed*

G Company moved out and followed the same path as E Company for about 1200 yards then crossed over the tracks to the left without incident other than rounding up a number of prisoners and receiving sporadic small arms fire. G Company captured their section of the objective with very little resistance.

Before the artillery fire lifted the H Company machine guns which had initially given the overhead fire support had gone out of action and moved out to join both companies on the objective. (30)

The entire action had taken about one and one-half hours and was completed before darkness. Now as it grew dark the reorganizing got under way for the attack the next day on SCHLICH as the other two battalions of the regiment moved out against MERODE. The highway in the 60th Infantry's zone was supposedly opened and permission to use it was granted to our battalion for the use of supplying the companies. Wire was laid along the railroad track and all were tied in for the night. Till (29) Personal knowledge; (30) Personal knowledge.

the next morning all was quiet in the 2nd Battalion Sector except for occasional enemy artillery fire.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

In glancing over this situation one sees an attack that has gone by the book. From beginning to end it has been planned and executed as one would expect a classroom problem to be run. Here for once the unit involved in the action was given time after receiving an order to prepare and plan for the attack. Seldom before or after has such a phenomenon happened. (31)

The time allowed thorough reconnaissance and terrain study by all the commanders and resulted in sound tactical employment of their units. Not only could plans be made for the units but complete and thorough coordination with those outfits supporting the attack was obtained. Any targets that were thought to be of danger were plotted in and registered on. Finally all personnel of the battalion were oriented on the plan not only orally but visually, another point that was usually never possible.

The plan of the Division in its use of the battalion was sound and the objective was a properly picked one. The location of ^{D'HORN} ~~it~~ gave our troops a good covered spot from which to jump the next day in the coordinated regimental attack on SCHLICH and MERODE. The other factor in favor of taking this objective was that it out flanked the German troops holding the above mentioned two towns. With a threat like that, a battalion to their rear flank, they would give way much quicker when pressed by the 3rd and 1st Battalion on their attack straight out of the woods.

A great deal of thought went into the 2nd Battalion plan of maneuver before it was finally decided to have E Company go first followed by G Company. The idea was that if E Company got pinned down only one company would thus be caught and there would still be a chance of helping them

(31) A-3

with the following company by having it immediately cross the railroad fill and advance using it as cover from the fire holding E Company down. Holding F Company back in JUNGERSDORF for the night while the other companies were in D'HORN might have been considered keeping the reserve too far to the rear, however, there was the reasoning that it would not fight in case of a counterattack that night due to the fact that it would add confusion to the others already in town. Also the two companies in D'HORN were full strength even after suffering some casualties in the attack.

The plan of supporting fires was excellent. It might be said that the outfit could have taken any objective with so much support. True, but credit must be given to the battalion commander for using this support offered him. All was pressed into service not just a fractional part. Too many commanders don't take advantage of such opportunities as were offered here. This tremendous volume of supporting fire was used by the troops, too. In the open field they never slowed up, even when mortar rounds came in on them they kept on moving. In doing so they got to the objective in the minimum time possible and caught the defender still in a daze from our heavy artillery pounding. It was definitely proven that the artillery kept the Germans underground in cellars and holes when an antitank gun was found loaded and aimed directly at the battalion's zone of advance. It was all set but nobody could get out to fire it. (32)

Finally in regard to the use of the tanks there had been doubts as to whether they should go with the leading elements or remain in JUNGERSDORF and support by fire. The decision to have them accompany the lead echelon, eventhough none ever reached the objective, was in this case believed proper. Their presence, it is felt, kept the Germans located in the open field before D'HORN, from opening fire and disclosing their positions. This enabled our troops to walk right up on (32) Personal knowledge.

them and dig them out of their positions, it also saved casualties among our men. There were approximately fifteen to twenty Germans and two machine guns taken in the field. The losses to the 2nd Battalion numbered about twenty wounded. Those of the enemy, though not exact but approximated, were twenty killed and eighty captured. (33)

A final factor that kept the advance from being stopped was the effective fire and smoke on SCHLICH and MERODE. The enemy there had no observation evidently because no fire was ever delivered from that flank, and it was definitely known that enemy were present there because the next day the 3rd Battalion, 39th Infantry, met resistance while attacking MERODE. (34)

LESSONS

1. All supporting fires must be coordinated and used to the best advantage. Registration before hand is invaluable.
2. During rest periods intensive training must be carried on covering small unit actions. This training proved its worth in that it gave the men confidence in each other.
3. A better result is obtained when there is time available to adequately prepare for all phases of an operation.
4. Routes of supply must be closely watched to insure that they are kept open, especially when there is only one.
5. The presence of tanks has a decided psychological effect on both the troops they are supporting and the enemy they are attacking.
6. Less casualties will be inflicted if troops keep moving when they come under mortar fire in an open area.
7. Smoke if properly used is an excellent means to screen danger areas, and must be adjusted as the wind shifts.
8. No matter what the situation there is always an element of luck.
The wet mine field in this case was an example of that.

(33) A-3; (34) A-6, p. 42.