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THE OPERATIONS OF THE CANNON COMPANY, 27TH INFANTRY
(25TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN SUPPORT OF THE 1ST BATTALION,
27TH INFANTRY DURING AN ENGAGEMENT AT
PEMIENTA, 29-30 JANUARY 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Cannon Company Reconnaissance Officer)

Type of operation described: MOVEMENT TO SECURE A ROAD
JUNCTION AND INTERCEPT AN ENEMY MOTORIZED COLUMN

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the Cannon Company, 27th Infantry, 25th Infantry Division, during an engagement at PEMIENTA, LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, on 29 - 30 January 1945 during the Central Plains phase of the LUZON Campaign.

Let us review briefly the major events which led up to this action.

By the end of 1944 American forces in the Pacific were over the hump so to speak. Large portions of the Japanese ground forces had been by-passed and were being contained in the NEW GUINEA - SOLOMON ISLANDS. The Allies enjoyed almost complete dominance of the air and seas. Two American Armies had penetrated the CENTRAL PHILIPPINES by invading LEYTE and MINDORO and a third Army was being formed in HAWAII.

On 26 December 1944 the Eighth Army took over control of operations in the LEYTE - SAMAR area from Sixth Army (1) and Sixth Army began assembling elements from bases in NEW GUINEA, NEW CALEDONIA, MOROTAI, MINDORO and LEYTE for an assault upon the island of LUZON. (2) (See Map A)

The Army made the initial landing on LUZON in the LINGAYEN GULF area on 9 January 1945 with two corps abreast the XIV Corps on the right and I Corps on the left. The 25th Division was in Army Reserve. (3)

The Plan of Operation of the Army was briefly divided into four phases:

(1) to establish a beachhead (2) to clear the Central Plain (3) to

- (1) A-4, p. 13
- (2) A-5, p. 180
- (3) A-5, p. 180

capture MANILA and (4) to establish bases for future operations against the Japanese. (4)

The enemy was unprepared in the landing area, and the initial landings were virtually unopposed. (5) However, opposition developed early in the Army's left flank and it became apparent that the Japanese did not intend to risk a major battle on the Central Plains but had chosen rather to make a stand in the mountains of Northern LUZON. (6)

It then became the mission of I Corps on the left to contain this strong threat to Army's left flank and to cut across the island to the east to prevent the escape of Japanese forces to the north while the XIV Corps on the right drove south to MANILA. (7)

On 17 January the 25th Division was committed in I Corps' zone of action between the 6th and 43d Divisions. By 27 January the Corps had advanced to the general line shown on Map B. (8)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

At this point in the advance of I Corps it can be seen that all main north - south lines of communication on LUZON had been cut except Highway 5. (9) The enemy had delayed the advance of I Corps by offering strong resistance in the foothills of the mountains near SAN FABIAN and along the line ROSARIO-POZORRUBIO-BINALONAN and in the CABARUAN HILLS. (10) In reducing the defense of SAN MANUEL the 25th Division had destroyed forty-five enemy tanks, (11) and the Sixth Division had encountered elements of a Japanese armored division in URDENITA. (12)

Reconnaissance indicated that the Japanese did not intend to take advantage of the defensive possibilities of the AGNO RIVER line. (13)

- (4) A-2, p. 5
- (5) A-4, p. 20
- (6) A-11, p. 1
- (7) A-6, p. 95
- (8) A-2, p. 43
- (9) A-2, p. 43
- (10) A-4, p. 22
- (11) A-4, p. 32
- (12) A-2, p. 32
- (13) A-11, p. 22

Weather conditions were ideal and none except American aircraft were seen in the skies. The terrain was flat, open, and dry, occasionally dotted with clumps of tropical trees and crossed by irrigation ditches. There was an excellent road net and accurate maps and aerial photographs were available. (14)

The days of fighting on a shoe string in the Pacific had ended. Troops were well equipped and there was an abundance of artillery, engineer, armored and air support. The high morale of American troops was evident as was the confusion and disorganization of isolated Japanese forces offering resistance in the Central Plains area. (15)

On 27 January the Commanding General I Corps issued Field Order #7 in which the 25th Division was assigned the following mission: "Retain control of the ASINGAN - SAN MANUEL - POZORRUBIO area until relieved by the 32d Infantry Division. On D Day secure phase line 1; and prepare to advance and secure the line MUNOZ (exclusive) - LUPAO (inclusive). Reconnoiter to the line SAN JOSE - DIGDIG. Be prepared to meet an enemy offensive from the northeast and east." (16) D Day was designated as 28 January and phase line 1 was the AGNO RIVER in the division zone of action.

Accordingly the Division Commander of the 25th Division ordered that the attack to the east continue at 0800 28 January with two regiments abreast. (See Map B). The 27th Infantry on the left of the division zone was assigned the mission of cutting the ROSALES - SAN LEON - UMINGAN road at PEMIENTA, blocking the road at this point and moving into position to attack UMINGAN.

The 35th Infantry was to advance in the right sector of the division zone with the mission of advancing along the ROSALES - SAN LEON Road and

(14) Personal experience of the author

(15) Personal experience of the author

(16) A-2, p. 44

also moving into position to attack UMINGAN, (17)

As can be seen on the map UMINGAN controlled the secondary road which extends through LUPAO and SAN ISIDRO to Highway 5 at SAN JOSE.

"Intelligence reports indicated the enemy would defend UMINGAN in strength."

(18)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 27TH INFANTRY

The 27th Infantry on 28 January from assembly areas in the vicinity of URDENTIA crossed the AGNO RIVER without opposition and occupied positions on the east side of the river as follows: the 1st and 2d Battalions in BALIGAYAN with Company C at SALVADOR astride the MANILA RAILROAD; the regimental command post with separate companies and detachments in SANTA MARIA. The 3d Battalion was in Corps Reserve.

On this date (28 January) the Commanding Officer, 27th Infantry, issued Field Order #5 which assigned missions as follows effective at 0800 hours on 29 January 1945: the 1st Battalion, with one platoon from Antitank Company and one platoon from Cannon Company attached was to advance on PEMIENTA and to block the SAN LEON - UMINGAN Road in all directions at or near PEMIENTA. The 2d Battalion was to block the approaches to BALIGAYAN from the northeast and to be prepared to close on the 1st Battalion. The 3d Battalion which was to be released from Corps Reserve at 0800 hours on the 29th was to move to an assembly area in the vicinity of BALIGAYAN. (19)

It should be noted that the only specific mission assigned to the Regimental Cannon Company was to attach one platoon to the 1st Battalion.

DISCUSSION OF THE MODIFIED EQUIPMENT OF CANNON COMPANY, 27TH INFANTRY

Since Cannon Company of the 27th Infantry was organized under a modified table of equipment at this time, as was the case of most

(17) A-3, p. 25

(18) A-3, p. 25

(19) A-1, p. C-VIII

regimental Cannon Companies in the Pacific Area, it will be necessary to digress briefly at this point to point out those modifications.

In lieu of the conventional six 105-mm howitzers M-3 with prime movers, Cannon Company of the 27th Infantry was equipped with six self-propelled howitzers -- the 105-mm howitzer motor carriage M7 commonly called "the M-7" or "the priest". For a sketch of the general appearance of the M-7 see Chart "A".

Each M-7 was further equipped with an M-10 armored ammunition trailer, and in addition to other normally assigned vehicles the company had three tractors and one bulldozer.

On 28 January Cannon Company of the 27th Infantry was at full strength and all equipment and supplies were in excellent condition. Morale was high. As a matter of fact in the 17 days the Company had been on LUZON they had not yet had an opportunity to fire a round at the enemy and the feeling was prevalent that finally we were getting close enough to Japs to start shooting.

It is pertinent to point out at this point also that there was a considerable divergence of opinion among the officers of the Company, and of the entire regiment for that matter, as to the proper employment of the M-7. Generally there were three schools of thought: (1) the M-7 should support by indirect fire against area targets in the manner of field artillery and mortar (2) the M-7 should advance with the infantry in Tank-Infantry team fashion and (3) the M-7 should be employed as an assault gun against strong points, and as an antitank gun. The latter school of thought prevailed on 28 January 1945. (20)

This divergence of opinion was due to the fact that since the issue of the M-7 to the regiment some seven months prior to this operation no published doctrine had been furnished by higher headquarters. The

(20) Personal experience of the author

training of the Company had been based on the combat experience of the personnel in the Company. This combat experience had been in the jungle of the SOLOMON ISLANDS where fields of fire had been limited and the maneuvering of large vehicles in battle areas had been virtually impossible. (21)

THE PLAN FOR THE EMPLOYMENT OF CANNON COMPANY AND PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTACK

Upon receipt of Field Order #5 on 28 January the Company Commander of Cannon Company in compliance with that order and in accordance with established procedures took the following action:

The 1st Platoon was sent to join the 1st Battalion in BALIGAYAN and to become attached. The 2d Platoon was sent to the vicinity of the 2d Battalion Command Post in BALIGAYAN to establish liaison with the 2d Battalion and to be prepared to support that battalion or to become attached in the event it was committed. The Platoon Leader of the 3d Platoon was directed to establish liaison with the Battalion Commander of the 3d Battalion as soon as that unit closed on BALIGAYAN the following day.

The Company Reconnaissance Officer was instructed to select a company assembly area between BALIGAYAN and SALVADOR on the following day, to displace the Company less two Platoons forward and establish local security prior to dark, and to supervise the re-supply of the 1st and 2d Platoons.

The Company Reconnaissance Sergeant was sent to establish liaison at the Regimental Command Post. The Company Commander stated that he, his driver, and the Communications Sergeant would move with the Regimental Commander's party on the following day. Established radio nets and messengers would be used for communications. Three days supply of 10 in 1 and C rations were on hand in the Company.

(21) Personal experience of the author

A full load of fuel and ammunition was on hand. (22)

NARRATION

In order to narrate the events and actions that occurred during the period from 0800 hours 29 January to 0430 hours 30 January 1945 while Cannon Company, 27th Infantry was supporting the 1st Battalion's efforts to block the SAN LEON - UMINGAN ROAD at PEMIENTA it will be necessary to shift the reader's attention alternately between the 1st Battalion with its platoon of cannons attached and the Cannon Company Command Post.

THE FIRST BATTALION FROM 0800 Hours to 1800 Hours 29 JANUARY (See Map C)

At 0800 hours 29 January the 1st Battalion, with one platoon of Antitank Company and one platoon of Cannon Company attached less C Company departed BALIGAYAN in approach march formation and closed on SALVADOR. At SALVADOR Company C and 75 Guerrillas of Squadron 69 joined the Battalion column.

The platoon of cannons was located in the middle of the Battalion column between the 2d Rifle Company and the Battalion Headquarters Company as per standing operation procedure.

The Battalion moved without contacting the enemy through the barrios (23) of CABALITIAN, FLORES, BUENA VISTA, and ESPERANZA. At ESPERANZA the column turned south to the road junction 600 yards west of PEMIENTA. This road junction was reached at 1345 hours.

When the Battalion column reached the road junction, Company C turned east toward PEMIENTA and as leading elements approached the barrio they received small arms and mortar fire. The Battalion Commander then directed A Company to envelop the position from the left and placed Company B in position to secure Company C from the right and rear. (24)

(22) Personal experience of the author

(23) A "Barrio" is the name of a small political subdivision in the Philippines. It corresponds roughly to an un-incorporated village in the United States, and normally consists of a small cluster of native homes.

(24) A-1, p. 9

The Battalion Command Post and Aid Station were established some 750 yards north of the road junction. The M-7s were moved off the road at that point while the Platoon Leader and Instrument Corporal went forward to join the Battalion Commander. The Liaison Corporal reported to the Battalion Executive Officer at the Battalion Command Post.

The attack of A and C Companies supported by mortars was carried on until 1800 hours at which time approximately three-quarters of the barrio had been taken. During the attack A and C Companies had received direct fire from dug-in field pieces and tanks. (25)

As yet the platoon of cannons had not yet fired or moved into firing position. The Combat Team Artillery had been registered on the enemy position.

CANNON COMPANY COMMAND POST FROM 0800 HOURS TO 1800 HOURS 29 JANUARY

In the vicinity of the Cannon Company Command Post at 0800 hours on 29 January were the 3d Platoon and the Company Supply and Administrative personnel and equipment less the kitchen truck and mess personnel who were with the Regimental trains.

A listing of the equipment of the Company Headquarters is pertinent to this narration. There were two $\frac{1}{4}$ -ton trucks--one assigned to the Reconnaissance Officer and one to the Company Motor Sergeant. There was one $\frac{3}{4}$ -ton truck for transporting impedimenta such as maps, typewriter, printed forms, etc. There was a $1\frac{1}{2}$ -ton maintenance truck for the wheeled vehicles and a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton maintenance and fuel truck for the M-7s. There was a $2\frac{1}{2}$ -ton ammunition supply truck, plus a bulldozer, 2 tractors, and four M-10 ammunition trailers.

The Company Reconnaissance Officer spent the morning of 29 January moving this Company Headquarters some two miles down the road toward SALVADOR. The 3d Platoon remained in BALIGAYAN to join the 3d Battalion

(25) A-1, p. 9

when it arrived there.

The move of the Company was delayed because the 1st Battalion was on the road moving at marching speed. By 1300 hours the new Company Command Post was established and wire communication was into regiment. The Reconnaissance Sergeant reported at that time that the 1st Battalion was still moving with no enemy contact reported.

At approximately 1430 hours the Reconnaissance Sergeant reported from Regimental Headquarters that the 1st Battalion had contacted the enemy at PEMIENTA and was feeling them out. No information was received at the Company Command Post from the Company Commander or the 1st Platoon during the afternoon.

At about 1530 hours the Platoon Leader of the 2d Platoon reported that he had accompanied the Battalion Commander of the 2d Battalion on a reconnaissance of the northern route to BUENA VISTA, and that the route was passable for M-7s.

Shortly after 1600 hours the Platoon Leader of the 3d Platoon reported that the Battalion Commander of the 3d Battalion upon arrival in BALIGAYAN had recommended to the Regimental Executive Officer that since there was already a Cannon Platoon in BALIGAYAN with the 2d Battalion, that the 3d Platoon be sent forward to the Company Area. The Regimental Executive Officer had accepted this recommendation, and the Platoon Leader stated that he was moving his Platoon forward.

The 3d Platoon arrived in the Company Area shortly after 1630 hours and soon thereafter the Company Commander arrived at his Command Post. He informed the Reconnaissance Officer and the Platoon Leader of the 3d Platoon that the 1st Battalion had cut the UMINGAN - SAN LEON ROAD at PEMIENTA, was in contact with the enemy, was going into a perimeter defense for the night and would resume the attack on PEMIENTA in the morning.

The Reconnaissance Officer asked permission to take the 3d Platoon Leader forward on a reconnaissance to the 1st Battalion area in the event that it might be necessary to move forward after dark. The Company Commander granted permission and stated that he would call the Regimental Commander to remind him that the 3d Platoon was available to support the 1st Battalion and to inform him that a reconnaissance was being made.

The Reconnaissance Officer, Platoon Leader 3d Platoon, radio operator, and driver then proceeded down the road toward SALVADOR. Upon reaching the railroad crossing just short of SALVADOR the Company Commander called on the radio and instructed the reconnaissance party to return to the Company Area.

Upon arrival back at the Company Area, the Company Commander explained that the Regimental Commander had stated that he did not plan to send another platoon to the 1st Battalion that night. By this time it was approximately 1730. By 1800 hours necessary security arrangements had been made for the night and the Company less two platoons was preparing to eat and bed down for the night.

THE FIRST BATTALION AREA FROM 1800 HOURS TO 2400 HOURS, 28 JANUARY

Up in the 1st Battalion area at 1800 hours the volume of fire directed at the leading elements of A and C Companies was increasing in intensity and the attack of the Battalion had bogged down. The Battalion Commander then directed that preparations be made to go into a perimeter defense astride the road for the night. (See Map D)

Company C was deployed on the south side of the road facing West, East, and South and Company A was deployed on the North side of the road facing West, East and North. A platoon of Company B with three 37-mm antitank guns and an M-7 attached was moved into position to form a road block at the Eastern edge of the perimeter facing PEMIENTA. At the same time another platoon from Company B with two 37-mm antitank guns and a

section of 81-mm mortars from Company D formed a road block on the western edge of the perimeter facing west.

The Battalion Command Post and Aid Station were not moved inside the perimeter but remained 750 yards north of the road junction where they were secured by remaining elements of Companies B and D, the attached guerrillas, and the Cannon Platoon less one section.

Enemy fire from the direction of PEMIENTA continued. Since the terrain was flat, observation to the east was limited to a ground observer. Therefore aerial observation was used to adjust artillery on suspected enemy firing positions. However, enemy gun positions were so well dug-in and camouflaged that this fire showed little or no effect. (26)

At about 1915 hours a particularly heavy concentration of fire fell on the eastern portion of the perimeter. The fire was estimated to be from 90-mm mortars and 75-mm field pieces. "For five minutes thirty rounds per minute fell on the area occupied by our troops causing 15 casualties, mostly from tree bursts." (27) Fire from the direction of Pemienta then became intermittent for the remainder of the night.

At 2000 hours the western road block observed two enemy tanks approaching their position down the road from the west. Fire was withheld until the tanks were within 300 yards of the road block. Then 37-mm and 81-mm (mortar) fire was placed on the tanks and both were destroyed. (28)

Shortly thereafter the western road block was taken under fire by rifle and automatic weapons fire and larger caliber direct fire weapons. By this time visibility was considerably restricted by darkness, but intense mortar and artillery fire was placed on the area from which the fire was coming. (29)

(26) Statement of Field Artillery Liaison Officer (8th F.A. Bn.) at Command Post of 1st Bn., 27th Inf. on 30 January 1945

(27) A-1, p. 10

(28) A-1, p. 10

(29) Statement of Captain Bernard Big made on or about 15 May 1949

By 2200 hours the supply of 81-mm mortar and machine gun ammunition within the western road block had been depleted. In addition the road block had sustained several casualties. Efforts by battalion to re-supply the position or evacuate the wounded had been unsuccessful because of the flat terrain and enemy fire.

At about 2230 hours the Battalion Commander gave permission to the western road block to withdraw to the vicinity of the Battalion Command Post. The withdrawal was completed by 2300 hours, and shortly thereafter the enemy ceased his fire on the position. (30)

However, sounds of enemy activity could still be heard to the west including the sounds of engines. The Company Commander of Company A, who was the senior officer within the perimeter then decided to move the M-7 and the 37-mm guns from the eastern edge of the perimeter to the western edge.

The section leader of the M-7, Sergeant John Charney of Bridgeport, Connecticut then made a foot reconnaissance to select his new firing position and to satisfy himself that all troops along the road were aware that the M-7 was going to move. He then went back to his section and moved his M-7 out on the road and headed it toward the new firing position. The crew kept well down within the firing compartment and the driver's vision was limited.

Near the western edge of the perimeter Sergeant Charney's M-7 passed a Japanese tank on the road coming from the west at a fast rate of speed. American troops had not fired on it because of the warning (31) that an M-7 was being moved, and they assumed that the Japanese tank was the M-7. The Japanese tank proceeded clear through the battalion perimeter and on

(30) Statement of Captain Bernard Big made on or about 15 May 1949

(31) Statement of Sergeant John Charney made on 30 January 1945

into UMINGAN without being fired on. (32) Such is the fog of war.

However, Sergeant Charney, upon passing the Japanese tank, immediately pulled his M-7 off to the left of the road into a firing position. Within twenty seconds another Japanese tank came down the road from the same direction and the M-7 stopped it in its tracks with a 105-mm armor piercing shell fired at a range of 50 yards. (33)

An enemy column of vehicles some 250 yards long followed at close interval behind this tank and the entire column was stopped on the road. All fires from the western end of the perimeter were brought to bear on the column. At 2400 hours the enemy was trying desperately to deploy his forces and return the fire.

CANNON COMPANY FROM 1800 HOURS TO 2400 HOURS, 29 JANUARY

Back in the Cannon Company area, a report was received from the Reconnaissance Sergeant at Regimental Headquarters at about 2030 hours of the situation in the 1st Battalion area as it was known at Regiment. The Company Commander verified the report with the Regimental S-3 and was assured by the S-3 that the Regimental Commander did not intend to take any further action until morning. No report was made by the Platoon Leader of the 1st Platoon with the 1st Battalion.

At 2215 hours the Company Commander was awakened by a phone call from the Regimental S-3. The message from the S-3 was approximately as follows: "It looks like all hell is about to break loose up there in the 1st Battalion area. The Colonel is sending the 3d Battalion up to reinforce the 1st, and wants you to send that other M-7 Platoon up there as fast as you can." (34)

- (32) This fact was widely known and discussed at the time by members of the 27th Infantry verified by Captain Jerome Christians in statement made on 9 December 1949.
- (33) Statement by Sergeant John Carney made on 30 January 1945 and contained in citation in which Sergeant Charney was awarded the B.S.M. The enemy tank was examined by the author on 30 January 1945.
- (34) Statement of Captain Frank Boyle (now Major, Ret.) on 29 January 1945.

The Platoon was awakened immediately and the M-7s started warming up. The Company Commander checked the map with the Platoon Leader to be sure that he knew the route. He then directed the Platoon Leader to lead the column in the first M-7. The second M-7 would follow, then the Company Commander and Communication Sergeant in the Company Commander's jeep, and the Reconnaissance Officer and a radio operator in another jeep. Each M-7 in addition to its normal five man crew carried a radio operator equipped with an SCR-300.

The column moved out of the Company Area at 2230 hours at a speed of approximately 20 miles an hour. The column moved without lights and the driver's vision was considerably restricted. However, moonlight and clearness of the night made the road fairly visible for about 20 or 30 yards ahead.

The column reached the railroad crossing and passed through SALVADOR without incident. As the lead M-7 reached the bridge over the small stream on the edge of the barrio of CABALITAN (marked Bridge X on Chart C) it halted momentarily. The bridge was about 20 feet long and constructed of lumber. The Division Engineers had placed a sign on the bridge which read: "10 ton limit."

However, the banks of the stream to the left side of the bridge were gradual, and the stream did not appear to be deep so the Platoon Leader directed the driver to by-pass the bridge and ford the stream. The driver applied power and plunged into the stream which proved to be some four feet deep. The far bank was also considerably softer than it appeared. However, the first M-7 pulled through it and proceeded down the road.

The driver of the second M-7 was more cautious in approaching the stream after he saw how deep the first M-7 had sunk down. As a result he moved into the stream slowly and did not have enough power to climb the far bank. The engine compartment became flooded and the M-7 stalled.

An effort was made to contact the lead M-7 on the radio but the

operator did not answer the call. The Company Commander then directed the Reconnaissance Officer to remain with the stalled M-7 and take necessary steps to get it out of the stream, while he attempted to overtake the lead M-7.

Meanwhile the lead M-7 reached road Junction "J" and took a right turn instead of continuing straight ahead towards FLORES. Due to the noise of the M-7, the limited visibility, and the concentration on the road ahead the Platoon Leader did not notice that he had lost the column until he was approximately 1000 yards down the road. (35)

At that point he stopped and checked his map and discovered that he was on the wrong road. He then turned the M-7 around and went back to road Junction "J". When he reached the road junction and found no elements of the column there he assumed that the column was ahead of him so he continued east toward FLORES.

Some 500 yards east of the barrio of FLORES an enemy patrol attacked the M-7 with a mine of either the magnetic or plunger type. The mine struck the M-7 on the left side just behind the driver's compartment. The force of the detonation punctured a hole 3 inches in diameter through the one-half inch armor plate and started a temporary fire in the crew compartment.

The Platoon Leader, radio operator, and crew were so stunned by the explosion of the mine and frightened by the fire that they immediately abandoned the M-7. Whereupon the Japanese on the ground attacked them with bayonets and knives. (36)

The driver was killed and the Section Sergeant and Radio Operator were seriously wounded. The gunner Corporal was less seriously wounded and rolled over into the ditch and played dead. (37) The Platoon Leader

(35) Statement of 1st Lt. Arvid Bolin made on or about 15 February 1945.

(36) Statement of 1st Lt. Arvid Bolin made on or about 15 February 1945

(37) Statement of Corporal Herman Kaiser made on 30 January 1945

and the two remaining men escaped and wandered into the Command Post of the 35th Infantry some $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles to the south shortly after midnight.

The Japanese patrol in the meantime attempted to destroy the M-7 by stuffing straw and grass up the exhaust and setting it on fire. (38)

Meanwhile the Company Commander reached the 1st Battalion area and discovered that the M-7 was not there. He then back-tracked on the road and discovered the M-7 knocked out at FLORES. He rushed the three wounded men to the Battalion Aid Station, where the two more seriously wounded died.

Back at the stream crossing, the Reconnaissance Officer had sent his driver back to the Company Area to bring up a tractor with which to pull the stalled M-7 out of the stream. By 2400 hours the moonlight illuminated the terrain clearly and liaison planes were in the sky and the artillery was busy registering and firing up ahead.

FIRST BATTALION AREA 2400 HOURS, 29 JANUARY TO 0430 HOURS 30 JANUARY

Up on the western edge of the 1st Battalion perimeter at Pemineta after the enemy column was stopped, the Japanese managed to reorganize themselves and maneuver three 10 CM howitzers off the road to the left into firing positions in a rice field from which they could bring direct fire into the perimeter. (39)

The 1st Battalion brought artillery, mortar, M-7 and 37-mm fire to bear on the enemy. The M-7 in the vicinity of the Battalion Command Post fired enfilade fire on the enemy. The mortars and 37-mm guns in that vicinity also fired. (40)

Disorganized groups of the enemy made several "Banzai" charges at the perimeter but were unable to penetrate it. By 0430 hours, when dawn

(38) Verified by an examination of the M-7 made by the author on 30 January 1945

(39) A-1, p. 10

(40) Statement of 1st Lt. W. A. Anderson made on 30 Jan 1945

began to break, the action had ceased. The following destroyed enemy materiel was counted:

- 8 medium tanks
- 8 tracked artillery prime-movers
- 2 4-Bogie armored tractors with trailers
- 8 10 centimeter howitzers
- 1 37-mm howitzer
- 5 6-wheel trucks
- 5 4-wheel trailers
- 2 commercial automobiles
- 1 Nash staff car
- 1 US Army jeep (41)

The Japanese officer in command of the column was killed in the back seat of the Nash Staff car. (42) Other enemy casualties were 122 killed and 3 prisoners of war. (43)

The enemy column was identified as the 2d Company, of the Sixth Tank Regiment and the 4th and 5th Batteries of the 2d Mobile Artillery Regiment, all components of the 2d Armored Division. (44)

CANNON COMPANY FROM 2400 HOURS, 29 JANUARY TO 0430 HOURS, 30 JANUARY

For Cannon Company from midnight until 0430 hours suffice it to say that the 2d Platoon moved with the 2d Battalion from BALIGAYAN to BUENA VISTA without incident while the two disabled M-7s of the 3d Platoon were towed ingloriously back to the Company Area by tractors.

As a matter of interest, the two disabled M-7s were in operation again within 24 hours. It was also discovered that the bridge at the stream crossing could easily support an M-7 due to the length and weight distribution of the M-7. (45)

- (41) A-1, p. 11
- (42) Verified by the author on 30 January 1945
- (43) A-1, p. 11
- (44) A-3, p. 27
- (45) Verified by author on 30 January 1945

2. PRE-CONCEIVED ASSUMPTIONS

From PEARL HARBOR until the LUZON operations, the 27th Infantry was either engaged in or training for operations in the jungle. Consequently prior to the LUZON operation, the Cannon Company trained with the idea of employing the M-7 in the jungle where fields of fire would be limited, roads limited, observation limited, and maps unavailable. There is an indication also that higher headquarters was thinking in terms of jungle operations when the Company was issued tractors to pull the M-10 ammunition trailers. The road speed of the tractors was about five miles per hour while the M-7s had a road speed of 25 miles per hour. The over-cautiousness and unbecoming timidity with which the company, and the whole regiment for that matter, performed in the engagement just described can be partially explained then by the fact that it was difficult to adjust to wide open terrain and mobile warfare after training in and for the jungle.

3. RECONNAISSANCE

The most glaring error on the part of Cannon Company personnel during this engagement was with regard to reconnaissance--either the lack of it or faulty reconnaissance. The Company Commander used his Reconnaissance Officer to move the Company Command Post and operate it. The Reconnaissance Sergeant was used as a liaison agent at Regimental Headquarters. When the Platoon Leader of the 3d Platoon and the Reconnaissance Officer started a reconnaissance up to the 1st Battalion area late in the day they were called back. When the 3d Platoon moved out after dark, the only officer in the Company Area who had made a reconnaissance of the route to be taken was the Company Commander. He did not ride at the head of the column where he could control it, nor did he warn the Platoon leader of the bridge or the road junction which he missed. Had the Platoon Leader of the lead tank been so warned, it is probable that the platoon would have

reached the 1st Battalion safely.

4. USE OF PERSONNEL

The Reconnaissance Officer was assigned the duty of moving and commanding the company rear echelon and the Reconnaissance Sergeant was used as a liaison agent at Regimental Headquarters as was mentioned above. In addition to diverting these two members of the company from their primary mission the Company Commander did not fully utilize other personnel in the company. For example the Company First Sergeant was fully capable of displacing and operating the Command Post. The Company Supply Sergeant with his ammunition Corporal and Armor Artificer were capable of conducting the re-supply of the Platoon. The Company Motor Sergeant with his tank and trucks mechanics was capable of conducting the necessary maintenance and re-fueling of the vehicles. It was not necessary that an officer be detailed to supervise these activities. Since the Company Commander was with the Regimental Commander and the Regimental S-3 all day, it is not believed that liaison at the Regimental Command Post was necessary, and that the Reconnaissance Sergeant could have been used more effectively on reconnaissance missions.

5. EMPIRE BUILDING

From the foregoing another unhealthy tendency is evident. That tendency is the inclination of some units--and within the regiment it is normally the separate companies--to build a small empire around Company Command Posts. Such unnecessary impedimenta as typewriters, fancy map boards, elaborate bedding rolls, cots, cooking utensils, reserve rations, and hammocks and the necessary vehicles to haul them are assembled thus forming a sizable rear echelon for the Company to move. Company Command Posts should consist of the minimum in equipment and personnel. Re-supply vehicles and communications personnel and equipment should be up where they are available to combat troops. This condition did not exist

on the road at about 2345 hours. During this period the Battalion was heavily engaged with the enemy both to the east and west of the roadblock. The only explanations that can be given for this unusual situation are: (1) the Battalion Commander failed to appreciate the fire potential of the M-7 (2) the Platoon Leader failed to find means and ways of employing the Platoon and (3) the Battalion Commander and the Platoon Leader were not sure of the proper role of the M-7s, and in particular neither appreciated fully the indirect fire potential of the weapon. In order to properly support the battalion and the platoon should have been placed in indirect fire positions and registered as soon as contact was made with the enemy. From this position the platoon could have assisted in seeking out and neutralizing the fire that was falling on the leading elements of the battalion. At the same time the M-7 could move forward to direct fire positions when suitable targets were located. However, the 1st Platoon failed to give close and continuous support to the 1st Battalion at PEMIENTA simply because it didn't fire--and fire was the only type of support of which the platoon was capable.

8. DISPERSION OF SUPPORTING FIRE

By the same token the entire Cannon Company failed to give close and continuous support to the Regiment because of the dispersion of the weapons. Although only the 1st Battalion was involved, the regimental objective was to establish the roadblock at PEMIENTA. The 1st Battalion then should have been given all available support that was necessary to accomplish this mission. However, the 1st Battalion was initially only given one cannon platoon, and a second was dispatched after the situation became critical. Let us review the locations of the six M-7s of Cannon Company at 2345 hours on 29 January--a crucial point in the engagement. Two were in BALIGAYAN with the 2d Battalion. One was stalled in the stream at Bridge X and one was knocked out in FLORES. Of the two assigned

to the 1st Battalion, one was 750 yards outside the roadblock in the vicinity of the Battalion Command Post. As a result only one of the six M-7s was in an effective firing position. It is felt that a more decisive employment of the weapons would have been to attach the entire company to the 1st Battalion. Then the Battalion Commander would have had available the indirect fire of a four gun battery and two M-7s for direct fire employment. The antitank defense of BALIGAYAN could have been left to the remainder of antitank company and the Battalion Antitank Platoon.

9. ABANDONING A DISABLED VEHICLE

When the M-7 was hit by the Japanese patrol at FLORES and the mine blew a hole in the side of the M-7 the entire crew abandoned the vehicle and jumped to the ground where they were attacked immediately by the enemy. It is hard to say that any of us would not do the same thing under the same circumstances. The blast from the mine, the flames inside the M-7 among the ammunition racks were undoubtedly frightening. However, armored vehicle crews should be prepared for such a situation and a logical consideration of the circumstances would dictate that the crew stay in the vehicle, put out the fire if possible, and fire at the attackers with individual weapons from the vantage point of the vehicle taking advantage of the protection afforded by the vehicle.

10. BRIDGE RECONNAISSANCE AND MARKING BY ENGINEERS

The Division Engineers had marked Bridge X as having a 10-ton weight limit. Since the combat loaded M-7 weighed in the neighborhood of 30 tons the Platoon attempted to by-pass the bridge and thereby lost one of the M-7s. Later reconnaissance proved that the bridge would support an M-7. The weight a bridge will support is determined by several factors among them the length of the span and the weight distribution of the load to be supported. In this instance the span of the bridge was short and the weight of the M-7 was well distributed over nine foot of track. It is believed then when track laying armored vehicles are

operating in an area, engineers should exercise caution in fixing load limits on bridges. If load limits are fixed, the sign should indicate whether or not light tanks, medium tanks, or heavy tanks can be supported.

LESSONS

1. When a new weapon is introduced to troops in a combat area, higher headquarters is responsible for the complete dissemination of instructions for the employment of the weapon.
2. Commanders must not allow past experiences to influence their training to the extent of assuming that impending operations will be under the same conditions as past operations.
3. Reconnaissance must be continuous in the combat area to include reconnaissance for all possible movements as well as for all probable movements.
4. Key noncommissioned personnel must be trained for and used fully in their assigned capabilities.
5. Regimental separate companies must refrain from the inclination to overweigh their rear echelons with un-necessary impedimenta.
6. Before heavy vehicles are moved after dark in the battle area steps must be taken to reconnoiter the route, secure the vehicles and establish control.
7. Commanders must use and exploit all supporting fires that are available to them.
8. Wherever possible supporting weapons should be kept centralized in order to exploit their flexibility and concentrate the mass of fires.
9. Crews of disabled vehicles should continue to fight from the vehicle as long as possible when attacked by foot troops at close quarters.

10. Engineer bridge reconnaissance parties should indicate what type tanks a bridge will support when a weight limit is placed on a bridge.