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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3D INFANTRY DIVISION
IN THE FIRST CROSSING OF THE VOLTURNO RIVER
12 - 14 OCTOBER 1943
(NAPLES - FOGGIA CAMPAIGN)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY DIVISION IN
A DELIBERATE ATTACK OF A HOSTILE RIVER LINE

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THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3D INFANTRY DIVISION
IN THE FIRST CROSSING OF THE VOLTURNO RIVER
12 - 14 OCTOBER 1943
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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 3d Infantry Division in the first crossing of the Volturno River, Italy, 12-14 October 1943 during the Fifth Army drive to the German Winter Line.

A brief discussion of major events pointing to this operation is presented to orient the reader.

On 3 September 1943 the British Eighth Army opened the Allied invasion of the Italian mainland with an amphibious assault across the Straits of Messino into the Calabrian Peninsula against slight enemy resistance. (1)

Six days later, on 9 September, the United States Fifth Army, consisting of the British X Corps and the United States VI Corps, stormed the beaches south of Salerno against strong enemy resistance. Having intercepted the Allied invasion convoy south of Capri, the entire enemy area was declared in "coastal alarm" and was "ready for battle". (See Map A) (2)

Critical days ensued. During the period 13-14 September the enemy counterattacked relentlessly in a determined effort to drive the invading forces into the sea, but the more determined troops of Fifth Army yielded little to the enemy onslaught. By the morning of 15 September, the crisis on the beachhead had passed and the enemy reverted to the defensive. (3)

(1) A-1, p.56
(2) A-1, p.25-32
(3) A-1, p.41

On 21 September Fifth Army launched a coordinated offensive with Naples and adjoining airfields as their immediate objectives. Overcoming stiff enemy resistance, the British X Corps entered Naples on 1 October while VI Corps with the 3rd, 34th and 45th Infantry Divisions abreast advanced through the rugged mountains to the east. (4)

The fall of Naples provided Fifth Army with a much needed port and on 6 October the first convoy arrived at Naples discharging troops and supplies. (5)

The German retreat before the unrelenting attack of Fifth Army at no time became a rout. Fighting violently to gain time to construct fortifications north of the Volturno River line, the enemy employed small delaying forces effectively which were withdrawn only after exacting their toll of Allied casualties. (6)

By 6 October Fifth Army arrived at the general line of the Volturno River. (See Map B) (7)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The Volturno originates high in the mountains above Venafro and follows an irregular course southeast to Amerosi where it is joined by the Calore River. Here the Volturno turns west and flows a devious sixty mile course to the Tyrrhenian Sea. The banks of the river rise vertically from the water level to heights as high as forty feet. Except after severe storms, the depth varies from three to six feet and the river can be forded at several points. Heavy rains, which had been falling since 27 September, made the Volturno a turbulent torrent of water rushing to the sea. (8) All bridges over the Volturno had

(4) A-1, p.44-48
(5) A-10, p.11
(6) A-1, p.44
(7) A-1, p.49
(8) A-7, p.46

been destroyed by Allied bombing or the retreating enemy. (9)

The German was prompt to take full advantage of this natural barrier and had cautiously emplaced his machine guns, antitank weapons and mines along the north river bank to delay the advancing Allies.

Opposing Fifth Army was the German XIV Panzer Corps consisting of the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division, the famed Herman Goering Panzer Division and the 3rd Panzer Grenadier Division plus elements of the 26th Panzer Division of LXXVI Corps. Fifth Army consisting of approximately 100,000 troops opposed an enemy force of approximately 40,000 troops; however, weather and terrain favored the enemy. Morale and combat efficiency of both forces were approximately equal. Enemy air power was greatly inferior.

(9)

Supplies built up at Salerno and the additional supplies arriving at Naples were sufficient to meet Fifth Army requirements although shortages existed in bridging equipment. Enemy supplies appeared to be adequate. (10)

Fifth Army, disposed on a front of approximately fifty miles, extended from Castel Volturno on the west to Pontelandolfo on the east. X Corps occupied the sector from Castel Volturno to a point one mile east of Capua and VI Corps occupied the area from Triflisco to Pontelandolfo. (11)

Initially Fifth Army plans called for a crossing of the river on the night of 9-10 October, however, due to the heavy rains and resultant muddy condition of existing roads the

(9) A-4, p.39-40

(10) A-2, p.65-75

(11) A-4, p.38-40

attack was postponed until the night of 12-13 October at which time both X Corps and VI Corps would effect simultaneous crossings. (12)

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF VI CORPS

On 4 October the 34th Division had been withdrawn from the front and placed in Corps Reserve. Upon arrival at the Volturno the 3rd Division was extended along a front of fifteen miles extending from Triflisco Gap to the junction of the Volturno and Calore Rivers. (13) The 45th Division, on the Corps east flank, had established a bridgehead across the Calore River at Benevento on 6 October and was slowly advancing down the Calore valley in the face of stiff enemy resistance. (14)

With two divisions extended over a front of some twenty-five miles, concentration of forces was essential and the 34th Division was ordered to take over the area held by the 30th Infantry Regiment of the 3rd Division. (See Map C) (15)

Attack plans of VI Corps called for the 3rd and 34th Divisions to effect simultaneous crossings of the river in their respective zones at 0200 hours, 13 October. (16) The main effort of VI Corps was to be made by the 3rd Division whose mission was to attack across the Volturno between narrow Triflisco Gap and a point south of Caiazzo, secure a bridgehead, and assist the advance of the British X Corps. (17) The 34th Division, crossing in the area between Caiazzo and Amerosi, was directed to occupy the villages of Caiazzo and San Giovanni. (18) The 45th Division was to press its attack down the Calore Valley,

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- (12) A-2, p.15, 16
 - (13) A-1, p.49
 - (14) A-8, p.53
 - (15) A-6, p.10
 - (16) A-2, p.16
 - (17) A-3, p.88
 - (18) A-5, pages unnumbered

gain the area in the vicinity of Amerosi, thereby threatening the German east flank, and drive on to Piedimonte to the north. (19)

THE 3RD DIVISION SITUATION

The veteran 3rd Division, battle seasoned by the African and Sicilian Campaigns, had been developed into an efficient combat organization. Prior to commitment in Italy on 18 September, the Division was brought up to strength with the transfer of two thousand experienced replacements from the 1st and 9th Divisions and equipment shortages were filled. Few casualties were sustained in the advance to the Volturno and recent successes of the Division bolstered morale to a high peak. (20)

Opposing the 3rd Division was the Mauke Battle Group of the famous Herman Goering Panzer Division, comprised of carefully selected and highly trained, battle experienced troops. (21)

The terrain, consisting of the flat cultivated valley floor surrounded by mountains rising to a height of 582 meters, afforded little cover for the attacking infantrymen, which necessitated a rapid advance across the open fields. Highway 87 and secondary roads paralleled the river on both the north and south, providing a reasonable road net for bridging sites. The river banks within the division zone were from five to fifteen feet high and the adjacent fields were soft and muddy due to recent rains. (22)

Patroling was intensified to locate fords and determine enemy strong points. Each patrol met heavy enemy machine gun

(19) A-8, p.53
(20) A-3, p.80-88
(21) A-2, p.17
(22) A-3, p.88

fire and few returned in tact. Despite enemy fire and the swift currents of the river, the determined patrols were successful in locating fords in each regimental zone.

Full advantage was taken of aerial reconnaissance and aerial photographs revealed that the dominating height of Monte Caruso, as well as adjoining Monte Majulo, was strongly defended. Directly across from Monte Tifata the enemy, anticipating a crossing in this narrow sector, was strongly entrenched at Triflisco. To the east isolated Monte Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo, rising from the flat valley floor, were strongly fortified protecting the approach to critical Monte Caruso. (23)

THE 3RD DIVISION PLAN OF ATTACK

Surprise coupled with deception characterized the 3rd Division plan of attack. Within the Division zone the 15th Infantry was the only unit that had been in contact with the enemy and the enemy had no knowledge of the consolidation of forces effected by VI Corps. The strength of the Division Artillery which had been deployed along a wide front in the advance to the Volturno was also unknown to the enemy. To avoid divulging its strength, Division Artillery was directed to fire normal fires during the preparatory stages. Patrolling was permitted throughout the entire area prior to the attack but it was not to be localized at any particular point. While the enemy realized that a crossing of the river was forthcoming, he had no way of knowing when, where and in what strength the main effort would strike. (24)

Realizing that strong enemy emplacements at Triflisco would seriously hamper a crossing in this area, it was decided to effect the main effort in the center of the Division zone with the 7th Infantry crossing the river east and west of "hairpin

(23) A-6, p.14-18
(24) A-6, p.16

loop". The 7th Infantry was to move out of its assembly areas on Monte Tifata and Monte San Leucio, cross the river at 0200 hours, drive across the open fields under cover of darkness and seize Monte Majulo. Company A, 751st Tank Battalion and Company C, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, were to support the attack by fire from the south bank, effect a crossing at daylight and join the infantry in the assault on Monte Majulo.

In the right zone, the 15th Infantry, less the 1st Battalion, assembled on the reverse slope of Monte Castellone, was to effect simultaneous crossings with the 7th Infantry, overcome enemy resistance on Monte Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo and occupy the high ground north of Piana di Caiazzo, thus flanking enemy positions on Monte Caruso. (25)

On the Division left flank the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, reinforced by the heavy weapons companies of the 30th Infantry, in position on the forward slopes of Monte Tifata, was to create a diversionary effort by feinting a crossing at midnight, two hours before the main attack, and continue heavy firing throughout the night. If the enemy withdrew in the face of the heavy fires, the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, located on the east slopes of Monte Tifata, was to effect a crossing. Enemy positions across the narrow gap were to be screened by smoke to obscure observation of the main effort to the east. The remaining elements of the 30th Infantry were held in an assembly area west of Caserta prepared to cross the river behind the 2nd Battalion. (26)

Division Artillery was to fire a one hour preparation commencing at 0100 hours, interspersing white phosphorous smoke

(25) A-6, p.16
(26) A-6, p.15

with high explosive at 0155 hours. In addition the 84th Chemical Battalion would employ smoke pots to screen the crossing and reinforce the fires of the Division Artillery with their chemical mortars. (27)

FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR THE ATTACK

Nightfall, 12 October, found the 3rd Division conducting routine activities along the front. The usual patrols slipped down to the river line drawing enemy fire. An occasional artillery shell illuminated the north bank of the river. The heavy seasonal rains had ceased and a full moon was overhead. In assembly areas troops, inactive for almost a week, checked equipment, drew ammunition and prepared to move out shortly after midnight to insure arrival at the river line by 0200 hours. (28)

NARRATION

THE 3RD DIVISION ATTACKS

At 2400 hours, 12 October, the murderous fires of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry and the heavy weapons companies of the 30th Infantry tore into enemy emplacements across the river at Triflisco. Mortar and machine gun fires saturated the terrain. (29)

One hour later, at 0100 hours, the 3rd Division Artillery opened fire on the north river bank and on known enemy installations. Troops of the 7th and 15th Infantry Regiments began their advance to the river line over the slippery, muddy slopes carrying guide ropes, life jackets and improvised rafts. Carrying parties struggled to get their assault boats down the steep river banks. The 3rd Battalion of the 15th Infantry was forced to abandon their bulky equipment and depend solely on guide ropes

(27) A-3, p. 89, 90
(28) A-6, p. 26
(29) A-3, p. 89

due to their precarious march to the river. At 0155 hours, the artillery interspersed white phosphorus with high explosive to cover the advancing infantry. (30)

7TH INFANTRY ATTACK

At 0200 hours, the 7th Infantry, spearheading the 3rd Division attack, crossed the river at "hairpin loop" with the 1st Battalion crossing downstream from the loop and the 2d Battalion, followed by the 3rd Battalion, crossing upstream from the loop. Members of the initial assault units swam the river to anchor guide lines. Others waded the cold chest-deep waters with rifles held overhead clinging to the guide lines. Assault boats, lowered down the steep banks, literally filled the river. Improvised rafts were torn to pieces by the raging torrents. Rubber pontoons were washed downstream and trees anchoring guide lines were uprooted. As troops of the 7th Infantry struggled with the forces of nature, the enemy began firing artillery barrages which had been registered on the river bank. Troops advancing along the narrow river's edge encountered mines which exacted their toll of casualties. Tracers from enemy machine guns blazed overhead. Fortunately the machine guns, emplaced on the higher north bank, were firing over the heads of the assaulting troops. Company and platoon commanders worked feverishly to get their troops to advance from the artillery saturated banks. Engineers were quickly pressed into action to clear paths through mine fields. (31) Supporting weapons of the 7th Infantry covered the advance of the infantrymen from the south bank and despite heavy enemy opposition the entire 7th Infantry was firmly entrenched on the north bank by 0640 hours. (32)

(30) A-6, p.27-29

(31) A-6, p.28,29

(32) A-3, p.90

With daylight tank destroyers dug-in on the south bank of the river engaged enemy tanks in the immediate area of the bridgehead, forcing them to withdraw to the north. (33) The attached tanks and tank destroyers of the 7th Infantry, scheduled to cross the river at daylight, were delayed due to heavy enemy fire which prevented bulldozers from tearing down the river banks to the ford. Without close support of armor, the 7th Infantry began advancing towards its objective. (34)

The 1st Battalion pushed across the open fields to a position just south of Highway 87 where it was ordered to hold the area taken and to protect the regimental left flank. (35)

The 2nd Battalion, taking cover in the irrigation ditches which crossed the open fields, pushed aggressively towards Monte Majulo. By 0800 hours, forward elements of the 2nd Battalion stood at the foot of the regimental objective while the 3rd Battalion mopped-up enemy machine gun emplacements which the 2nd Battalion had bypassed in its advance during darkness. As the 2nd Battalion occupied the regimental objective of Monte Majulo, the 3rd Battalion, despite heavy enemy artillery fire, pushed its way painfully across the open fields and drove to the high ground west of Monte Majulo to secure the left flank of the regimental objective. (36)

While the 2d Battalion was reorganizing on Monte Majulo, six enemy tanks were reported approaching the area. (37) At 1012 hours, British intelligence intercepted an enemy radio signal revealing that the 3rd Panzer Battalion was preparing to counterattack. With tanks and tank destroyers still south of the river and with rifle launcher teams critically low or out of

(33) A-6,p.31
(34) A-3,p.90
(35) A-6,p.29
(36) A-6,p.29-31
(37) A-3,p.91

ammunition, the situation appeared critical. An urgent call was dispatched to Company A, 751st Tank Battalion, to get its tanks across the river. Despite enemy machine gun and artillery fire which had prevented bulldozers from preparing approaches to the ford, men of Company A, 10th Engineers tore down the river banks with picks and shovels and within the hour the first tank arrived on the north bank. By early afternoon fifteen tanks and three tank-destroyers were north of the river. (38)

Meanwhile artillery fires from the 10th and 39th Field Artillery Battalions had driven off the six enemy tanks and the threatened counterattack of the 3rd Panzer Battalion never materialized. Our positions on Monte Majulo were secured. (39)

15TH INFANTRY ATTACK

In the right sector, the battle pursued a similar course. The 15th Infantry, attacking with the 2nd and 3rd Battalions abreast hit the river line at 0200 hours. The 2nd Battalion, with Monte Monticello as its initial objective, split with Company E crossing the river west of a secondary road at the base of Monte Castellone. Company F, followed by Company G, crossed about a thousand yards upstream. Fierce close-in fighting ensued at the river line and the battalion suffered heavy casualties. Enemy artillery and mines, effectively tied-in with the deadly machine gun fire, inflicted further casualties. After one hour of fierce fighting, the determined 2nd Battalion succeeded in breaching the enemy's river defenses. Companies E and F, advancing from their positions on the north river bank converged on Monte Monticello while Company G mopped-up isolated enemy pockets of resistance bypassed on the river bank.

(38) A-6, p.31

(39) A-3, p.91

Overcoming stubborn resistance, Companies E and F drove the enemy from Monte Monticello to take the battalion objective. Here the battalion re grouped, brought up ammunition, evacuated casualties and prepared to continue the advance.

On the regimental right flank, the 3rd Battalion's advance pursued a more rapid course. Despite the absence of assault boats and rubber pontoons, which the battalion was forced to leave in its assembly area on Monte Castellone, assaulting parties quickly crossed the river, anchored guide ropes and the battalion moved rapidly through the swift waters to the north bank. Aided by machine gun and mortar fire from the south bank, the assaulting forces quickly overran enemy machine gun emplacements along the river bank and pushed on towards Monte Mesarinolo. Here heavy enemy machine gun fire was encountered and the German fought desperately to hold the dominating height. After flanking enemy machine gun positions, Companies L and K stormed up the steep slopes to take the battalion objective which had been utilized by the enemy as a command post. Numerous prisoners were taken including an enemy forward artillery observer who had been directing effective enemy artillery fire on the fords at the river. With Monte Mesarinolo secured, the 3rd Battalion reorganized to continue the advance.

The enemy, withdrawing slowly to the north, delivered heavy artillery fire on Monte Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo forcing troops of the 15th Infantry to take cover. Enemy tanks and self-propelled guns in the vicinity of Caiazzo fired directly into the reorganizing troops. Every movement on the two hills drew enemy fire. An enemy tank advancing down Highway 87 from

Caiazzo was disabled by artillery fire and the escaping crew was promptly disposed of by mortar fire. Meanwhile the anti-tank platoon of the 3rd Battalion succeeded in establishing a road block approximately a mile and a half west of Caiazzo astride Highway 87. Here a second enemy tank was destroyed by effective fire from a rocket launcher and the crew was quickly annihilated by rifle fire. The intensity of enemy fire receded during the early afternoon and the 2nd Battalion drove north, overcoming light enemy resistance, and cleared the high ground surrounding Monte Caruso. The 3rd Battalion, advancing against equally light enemy resistance, entered Piana di Caiazzo only to find that the enemy had withdrawn. Pushing on to the high ground north of Piana di Caiazzo, the 3rd Battalion occupied its objective. With the 7th Infantry firmly entrenched on Monte Majulo and the 15th Infantry in possession of the high terrain northwest of Piana di Caiazzo, the enemy was forced to withdraw from important Monte Caruso. (40)

30TH INFANTRY ATTACK

The diversionary effort of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry, and elements of the 30th Infantry on the Division left flank greatly contributed to the success of the 7th and 15th Infantry. However, the fact remained that the enemy was still firmly entrenched at Triflisco Gap and there appeared to be little chance that the enemy would withdraw despite the successes of the 7th and 15th Infantry. With the attack of the British 56th Division on the Division's left flank beaten back, it became urgent to dislodge the enemy from Triflisco to secure the Division's left flank. (41)

(40) A-6, p.32-35
(41) A-6, p.37,38

Numerous patrols were dispatched to the river by the 2nd Battalion, 30th Infantry, during the night 12-13 October in an effort to find a weak spot in the enemy's defenses; however, all were driven back by fierce enemy machine gun fire. At 0440 hours, a patrol succeeded in forcing the river in the face of enemy fire, but was beaten back after capturing five prisoners. It appeared unlikely that the 2nd Battalion could force a crossing at Triflisco without undue casualties. (42)

Gravely concerned with the exposed left flank of the Division, the Division Commander visited Triflisco Gap at noon on 13 October and ordered the 2nd Battalion to force a crossing. The 1st and 3rd Battalions, in their assembly areas west of Caserta, were ordered to move to positions behind Monte Castellone and to prepare to cross the Gap behind the 2nd Battalion. (43)

At 1300 hours, the 2nd Battalion launched its attack supported by artillery and the fires of the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry. By 1340 hours, two platoons succeeded in getting to the north bank of the river. As the infantrymen emerged from the river and attempted to consolidate their bridgehead, the enemy opened with deadly machine gun fire inflicting heavy casualties on the two platoons. Despite artillery and mortar support, the remnants of the two platoons were forced to withdraw to the south bank of the river. Additional platoons were brought up to the river line in an effort to effect further crossings, however, despite increased mortar and artillery support, they were pinned down on the south bank by deadly enemy machine gun fire.

(42) A-3, p. 91

(43) A-6, p. 38

Due to severe casualties and the demoralizing enemy fire, plans to force a crossing at Triflisco during the afternoon of 13 October were abandoned. (44)

When it became apparent that a crossing at Triflisco could not be forced without undue casualties, the 1st Battalion, 30th Infantry, marching towards Monte Castellone, was directed to cross the river at the tank ford just below "hairpin loop" and to make a night attack on the Triflisco ridge from the east. At dusk the 1st Battalion arrived at the tank ford to find that the Engineers had completed a light jeep bridge over the river. The battalion hastily crossed and moved over the open fields towards its objective under cover of darkness. The battalion went into an assembly area south of highway 87 and made last minute preparations for the attack on Triflisco.

Meanwhile the 3d Battalion, 30th Infantry, which had moved out of its assembly area west of Caserta behind the 1st Battalion, crossed the Volturno at 2200 hours, 13th October over an eight ton bridge which had been completed by Division Engineers at the base of Monte Castellone. Taking up a position west of Monte Monticello, the Battalion prepared to support the attack of the 1st Battalion.

At 0100 hours, 14 October, the 1st Battalion crossed Highway 87 and advanced cautiously towards Triflisco. Enemy fire from the stubbornly defended Gap was not forthcoming and as the Battalion prepared to assault its objective it was evident that the enemy had withdrawn during the early evening. At 0330 hours, the 1st Battalion signaled regiment that it had occupied its objective.

At 0445 hours, fourteen hours after its initial attempt to cross the Volturno, the 2nd Battalion waded across the river at Triflisco unhampered by enemy fire. At daybreak the 1st Battalion, 15th Infantry and the heavy weapons companies of the 30th Infantry followed behind the 2nd Battalion. (45)

The morning of 14 October found all Infantry units of the 3rd Infantry Division across the Volturno, firmly entrenched on their objectives and prepared to push on to the German Winter Line. In a little more than twenty-four hours, the Division had forced a crossing of a hostile river line in the face of stiff enemy resistance and against adverse weather and terrain. (46) Casualties, numbering three hundred and fourteen, killed, wounded and missing, were light considering the task that had been accomplished. (47)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. SURPRISE AND DECEPTION

The 3rd Division, possessing considerable knowledge of enemy fortifications was prompt to take advantage of this information and avoided an initial crossing of the Volturno at Triflisco Gap where the enemy had concentrated his strongest defenses. By employing a vigorous diversionary effort at this point and forcing simultaneous crossings to the east, the enemy was unable to determine the main effort of the attack and consequently delayed his counterattack which failed to materialize. With the reduced frontage effected by the consolidation of VI Corps forces, the 3rd Division was careful not to disclose their strength to the enemy by increased artillery fires or by moving units to the river line prior to the attack. Bridging equipment

(45) A-6, p.38
(46) A-6, p.39
(47) A-2, p.26

constructed by the Engineers prior to the attack was kept concealed in assembly areas to the rear. Although patrolling was intensified, it was never localized in a particular area to give away the Division plan of attack. Smoke, used to obscure enemy observation posts, assisted materially in facilitating concealment of bridgeheads during the initial crossings and bridge construction.

2. PATROLING

The aggressive patrolling conducted prior to the attack was greatly responsible for the small number of casualties sustained in the operation. In a deliberate river crossing, conducted under cover of darkness in the face of determined enemy resistance, enemy strong points must be known, routes and fords must be reconnoitered and marked, and alternate approaches must be located. Patrols located fords in each regimental sector which permitted the launching of a coordinated Division attack throughout the Division zone. Information of enemy machine gun emplacements gained by patrols, enabled small unit commanders to plan the assault of these positions prior to the attack, consequently enemy fortifications were quickly reduced.

3. AERIAL PHOTOGRAPHS

Aerial photographs available to the 3rd Division revealed that the enemy was strongly entrenched at Triflisco and had defended Monte Majulo, Monte Caruso, Monte Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo. This information, in addition to information secured by patrols, enabled the Division Commander to plan his strategy of attack and assisted immeasurably in the success of the Infantry regiments. The knowledge gained of enemy dispositions reduced the possibility of an enemy surprise counter-attack since our forces knew where he was and what he was capable of doing.

4. ENEMY DEFENSES

Enemy machine guns, emplaced on the north bank of the Volturno River firing final protective fires, were ineffective since they were located high above the water level and fired over the heads of assaulting troops. Care must be taken to locate machine guns firing final protective fires to gain maximum grazing fires. In the defense of a river line if such fires cannot be gained at the river's edge, machine guns must be emplaced to the rear to insure the destruction of an attacker. Other enemy defenses on Monte Monticello and Monte Mesarinolo as well as Monte Majulo and Monte Caruso were not coordinated consequently these positions were singularly isolated and overrun by the attacking forces. A defense of the high ground in rear of the river line would have reduced enemy frontages, avoided salients created by the winding river, effected greater coordination of fires and permitted greater economy of force.

5. ENEMY ARMOR

Enemy tanks which participated in the battle after daylight on 13 October were committed in a piece-meal manner consequently they were quickly reduced by tank hunter teams or dispersed by artillery. Had the efforts of these individual tanks been coordinated, they would have seriously threatened the attack since it was not possible to get tanks and tank destroyers across the river to support the attacking infantry until the afternoon of 13 October. Enemy tanks should have been emplaced forward to furnish antitank protection to front line units and in position for early counterattack.

6. AGGRESSIVENESS IN THE ATTACK

The aggressive advances of the 7th and 15th Infantry across

the open fields of the Volturno Valley greatly reduced the number of casualties inflicted by enemy artillery. Troops were not permitted to loiter at the river line and after enemy machine gun emplacements had been reduced, units pressed vigorously forward to their objectives before daylight permitted enemy observation to adjust effective artillery fire. The rapidity of their advance, aided by surprise and deception, prevented an enemy counterattack when our troops were most vulnerable since the enemy could not determine their definite location or main strength. Aggressive leadership was displayed at all echelons of command.

7. ARMOR SUPPORT

Tanks of Company A, 751st Tank Battalion and tank destroyers of Company C, 601st Tank Destroyer Battalion, in position on the south banks of the river, rendered effective fire support to the 7th Infantry during the initial phases of the attack. However, due to enemy fire, Engineers were unable to prepare approaches to the reconnoitered tank ford and consequently the 7th Infantry had to continue the attack without armored support. Had the reported enemy counterattack of the 3rd Panzer Battalion materialized, it would have constituted a serious threat to the bridgehead since the 7th Infantry was without antitank protection except for rocket launchers which were precariously low on ammunition. Provisions should have been made for an alternate tank ford to insure armored support in the expansion of the bridgehead and the assault of the final objective.

8. ENGINEER SUPPORT

The rapidity with which the Engineers constructed bridges was an important factor in the success of this operation. Prior

to darkness on the first day of the attack, the Engineers had constructed a light "jeep" bridge across the Volturno which greatly facilitated evacuation of wounded and the supply and support of the bridgehead. By 2200 hours of the first day of the attack an additional eight ton bridge, capable of supporting two-and-a-half-ton trucks and light artillery, had been completed. The installation of these bridges insured rapid support of our forces north of the river, enabling them to continue their attack to the north. Through careful planning, thorough reconnaissance and ingenuity in improvising substitutes for critical bridging items, the Engineers were prepared to install bridges before the attack began.

LESSONS

1. Surprise and deception, carefully coordinated and fully exploited, can materially contribute to the success of battle and substantially reduce casualties.
 2. Aggressive, detailed patrolling is essential to the successful execution of a deliberate river crossing.
 3. Information obtained from aerial photographs can materially contribute to the strategy of battle and reduce the calculated risk.
 4. In planning the defense of a river line, extreme caution must be taken to insure machine guns can fire grazing fire at the level of the water.
 5. In the defense of a river line, armored elements must be kept forward in close support of the main line of resistance, prepared to counterattack assaulting forces before they can establish an effective bridgehead.
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6. In assaulting a defended river line and attacking over open terrain, troops must move aggressively to avoid heavy casualties from enemy mortar and artillery fire.

7. In planning a deliberate assault of a fordable river line alternate fords for both vehicular and foot traffic must be selected to insure elements in a coordinated attack effect crossings as scheduled.

8. In a river crossing operation Engineers must begin erection of bridges immediately after the bridgehead is established to insure adequate support of assaulting troops.