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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY C, 513th PIR
(17th AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON FLAMIERGE, BELGIUM
4 JANUARY 1945.
(ARDENNES CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Platoon Leader and Company Commander)

Type of operation described: PARACHUTE INFANTRY RIFLE COMPANY IN
THE ATTACK OF A PREPARED POSITION

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 2

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of Company C, 513th Parachute Infantry, 17th Airborne Division in the Battle of the Bulge, 4 January 1945, during the Ardennes Campaign.

The 17th Airborne Division arrived in England, 28 August 1945 and was assigned to the First Allied Airborne Army, which was composed of the 101st Airborne Division, the 82d Airborne Division, the 1st and 6th British Airborne Divisions, and the 1st Polish Paratroop Brigade. (1)

Orders were received to prepare for future airborne employment so the 17th Airborne Division engaged in an intensive training program with marked emphasis on physical activity. One airborne mission was assigned, rehearsed, and called off. (2)

Christmas was coming and the division prepared for a joyous Noel when Von Runstead struck with his Panzers in the Ardennes on 16 December 1944. (3)

On 19 December 1944 the 17th Airborne Division was alerted for an air transported move to the vicinity of Reims, France. Within 24 hours after receiving this warning order the division closed into its assigned marshaling areas from Camp Barton Stacy, Wiltshire, England. (4)

For this movement the division was split into two echelons: the air transported echelon consisting of the troops and that equipment which could be air transported by the C-47s, and the seaborne echelon with the division's

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- (1) A-5, p. 338
(2) A-5, p. 340
(3) A-10, p. 344
(4) A-10, p. 344
A-5, p. 376, Personal knowledge

heavy equipment. (5)

The air transported movement of the division was delayed for four days by poor flying weather. However, in doubtful weather during 23 and 24 December the 17th Airborne Division was transported to the vicinity of Reims, France. (6) (See Map A)

The air transported movement of the 17th Airborne Division from England to Reims, France by the IX Troop Carrier Command required 1,297 troop carrier aircraft to fly 13,397 personnel with their personal equipment. (7)

The division, upon landing, moved by trucks to the vicinity of Mourmelon, France to await further orders. The seaborne echelon which had not been delayed by the weather joined the division at Mourmelon. Orders arrived immediately and the division moved from Mourmelon on 25 December 1944 to the Meuse River. (8)

The mission of the division along the Meuse River was to stop the further penetration of the German forces, improve defensive positions, and be on the alert for enemy airborne activity. The division's responsibility for the defense of the river extended from Givitz to Verdun, a distance of 80 miles. (9) (See Map A)

The division remained at the Meuse River position without undue incident except for enemy bombing and strafing of the bridges across the river until 1 January 1945 when the division was attached to VIII Corps. (10)

VIII Corps was part of the Third Army and consisted of the 87th Infantry Division, the 11th Armored Division, and the 101st Airborne Division and was located in the Bastogne Area. (11)

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- (5) A-9, p. 72, Personal knowledge
(6) A-9, p. 73
(7) A-5, p. 118
(8) A-9, p. 73
(9) A-5, p. 389, A-9, p. 73
(10) A-9, p. 74
(11) A-1, p. 204

THE GENERAL SITUATION

On 16 December 1944, when the Germans opened their attack in the Ardennes, they were on familiar terrain for it was through this area that they launched their great 1940 attack, which drove the British from the continent and France out of the war. That first attack was also lead by Von Runstead. (12)

This last great attack of the Germans in 1944 was made with three armies, consisting of 24 divisions with supporting troops. This attack was made with such strength against the calculated risk portion of the Allied lines that success for the Germans seemed within reach. Reinforcements were rushed to the battle area. Included among these reinforcements were the 101st Airborne Division, which rushed to Bastogne where it was joined with elements of the 28th Infantry Division and the 10th Armored Division and was almost immediately surrounded. (13)

The German Fifth Panzer Army applied some pressure at Bastogne but finding it strongly held rushed onward to the west and to the north bypassing this vital communications center and road net. Because of the weather and the terrain the side that held the roads and the communication network had a marked advantage. Bastogne was a thorn in the Germans side. (14)

The German penetration reached its peak when German Armored columns reached Cliney and Gelles, a distance of some fifty miles. (15) (See Map B)

On 1 January 1945 the Germans were determined to wipe out the Bastogne salient. They concentrated 11 divisions around the neck and shoulders of the Salient; six of these divisions were Panzer. Enemy troops had been shifted from the northern front and additional strength had been brought from the rear areas. (16)

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- (12) A-1, p. 204
(13) A-10, p. 346
(14) A-10, p. 357
(15) A-2, p. 146
(16) A-10, p. 362

The Allies had also regrouped their forces and with the First Army on the north of the German penetration and the Third Army on the south they were prepared to launch a large scale coordinated attack to pinch off the German penetration and trap the enemy forces. (17) (See Map B)

SITUATION AND PLANS OF THE 17th AIRBORNE DIVISION

On 1 January 1945 the 17th Airborne Division received orders to attack north through the 11th Armored Division west of Bastogne with the L'Ourthe River as the division objective. The attack date was 3 January. (18)

The division, at this time, was composed of the 513th Parachute Infantry, the 507th Parachute Infantry, the 193d Glider Infantry, and the 194th Glider Infantry. (19)

The lack of organic transportation in a light airborne division made the entire division except for command vehicles dependent upon nonorganic transportation. The transportation, when it arrived, consisted of large open panel, semi-trailer cattle trucks. The trucks were badly overloaded and weather conditions severe. The roads were in miserable condition due to snow and ice. The attack was postponed until 4 January due to the inability of the units of the division to arrive at their forward assembly areas in time for the attack. (20)

For the attack the 17th Airborne Division planned to employ the 513th Parachute Infantry on the right (east) of the Division Zone. The 194th Glider Infantry was to attack in the left (west) of the Division Zone. The 507th Parachute Infantry and the 193d Glider Infantry were to be in reserve. (21)

ENEMY UNITS

Opposing the division on its six mile front were the following German units: the 3d Panzer Grenadier Division, the 15th Panzer Grenadier Division,

(17) A-8, p. 2, A-10, p. 364

(18) A-1, p.204

(19) Personal knowledge

(20) Personal knowledge

(21) A-9, p. 20

and the 26th Volksgrenadier Division. The two Panzer Grenadier Divisions were seasoned fighting units, which had been refitted with new tanks in the middle of December, and after a rest returned to the lines. The Volksgrenadier Division was a newly committed unit fanatical in resistance but not regarded highly as an assault unit. Its equipment was new. (22)

(See Map C)

THE REGIMENTAL PLAN OF ATTACK

The 513th Parachute Infantry planned to employ the 1st and 2d Battalions as the assault battalions. The 1st Battalion on the left (west) was to take the town of Flamierge and the high ground west of Flamierge and continue the attack to the north. The 2d Battalion was to attack in its zone, take the town of Flamizouille and continue the attack to the north. The 3d Battalion was designated regimental reserve. (23)

THE BATTALION SITUATION

At dusk on 2 January 1945, after riding for 16 hours in open cattle trucks, the 1st Battalion, 513th Parachute Infantry arrived in an unknown village in Belgium. The men were cold, tired, and hungry after riding in the open trucks. Roadblocks and outposts were set up and patrols were sent out to gain contact with other units of the regiment. At 0100, 3 January, orders were received to move forward at 0400 hours. From 0400 until 0600 the battalion waited in the snow and cold for transportation. Finally the trucks arrived and the 1st Battalion was moved forward to a woods south of Mande St Etienne. The battalion dug in forming a perimeter defense. (24)

(See Map C)

THE COMPANY SITUATION

No information had been received by Company C, 513th Parachute Infantry regarding the enemy situation or possible future employment, whether attack

(22) A-2, p. 146, 147; A-11, Annex No. 32

(23) A-9, p. 66

(24) A-9, p. 74

or defense, during the move from the Meuse River to the woods Bois de Fragette.

(25)

At 1800 hours, 3 January, as the troopers were eating their first hot meal in 3 days, orders were received to move forward. Captain Robert C. Kendrick, Company Commander, was shown a circle on a map and told to move out at dark. Company C was the lead company followed by Companies B, Headquarters, and A. (26) (See Map C)

At 1900 hours Company C moved out with the battalion following. No time had been allowed for reconnaissance. No friendly troops were in front of the company. It was dark and snowing heavily. There was no organic transportation within the company and the men improvised sleds for the movement of ammunition. This proved to be heartbreaking work for the men and officers carried individual weapons, packs with sleeping bags, rations and crew-served weapons, including nine light machine guns and three 60mm mortars.

(27)

The move was made single file through the snow with each man holding on to the man in front in order to maintain contact. Company B, the second company in the column, lost contact and the battalion commander ordered Company C to proceed alone. At 2100 hours Company C arrived in the assembly area. The rest of the battalion arrived at 2300 hours. Artillery fire was received as Company C dug in at the edge of the woods. (28)

The battalion commander ordered two patrols sent out, one to make contact with the 2d Battalion on our right (east), and the other to gain contact with the 194th Glider Infantry on our left (west). The patrol sent to the west returned with the information that a gap of 1000 yards existed on our left (west) between the battalion and the 194th Glider Infantry. The patrol

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- (25) A-6
(26) A-6
(27) A-6, Personal knowledge
(28) A-6, Personal knowledge

sent to the east failed to return. The battalion commander, Colonel Alton Taylor, ordered no patrolling forward (north) of the woods. (29)

At 0200 hours on 4 January, Captain Robert C. Kendricks received orders to report to the battalion command post for an attack order. This was the first information received by the company regarding future employment. (30)

Colonel Alton Taylor gave the battalion attack order to each company commander in a two-man fox hole with a blanket over the top of the hole. Equipment for receiving the order consisted of a flashlight and a map. The order was oral. The battalion staff did not participate in the order. Coordination with the battalion staff and the other company commanders was difficult due to the incessant artillery fire. No overlay was issued. Each company commander received a map of the area of attack. (31)

No intelligence was received regarding enemy strength, composition or disposition. The tone of the battalion attack order indicated that the L'Ourthe River would be reached in four days without difficulty. (32)

Fourteen battalions of artillery were to support the attack. Liaison officers and forward observers were to report prior to the attack. One platoon of tanks from the 11th Armored Division was to support the battalion attack. The tanks were to arrive in the morning prior to the attack. The Air Corps was to fly cover. (33)

The 1st Battalion was to take Flamierge and the high ground to the west and continue the attack to the north on order. The line of departure was the Bastogne road. The assault companies were to leave the edge of the woods at 0800 hours in order to reach the line of departure at 0830 hours. Company C was to attack from present positions at 0800 hours, take Flamierge and continue the attack to the north. Company B was ordered to attack from

(29) A-6, Personal knowledge
(30) A-6, Personal knowledge
(31) A-6
(32) A-6
(33) A-6

present positions at 0800 hours, to take the high ground west of Flamierge and continue the attack to the north. One section of light machine guns was attached to each assault company. The direction of attack was on an azimuth of 355 degrees. (34) (See Map C)

Company A was designated as battalion reserve and was to follow Company C prepared for commitment on the battalion right flank. (35)

At 0400 hours 4 January, Captain Kendrick arrived back at the company CP and immediately sent for his platoon leaders. The company area was under constant artillery fire. The company attack order was given to each platoon leader in the company commander's fox hole with a shelter half over the top of the hole. (36)

After a general orientation, which covered units on the right and left, artillery, tank and Air Corps support, Captain Kendrick gave his plan of attack. Company C was to attack Flamierge from present position at 0800 hours with the 1st and 3d Platoons leading the attack. The 1st Platoon was to attack on the right. The 3d Platoon was to attack on the left. The 2d Platoon was to follow the 1st Platoon by bounds on Captain Kendrick's order. One light machine gun was attached to each of the assault platoons. Captain Kendrick planned to follow the assault platoons by 100 yards with his command group. (37) (See Map D)

No extra ammunition was available. The attack was to be made with the ammunition carried from the Meuse River position. Shortages existed in rocket launcher ammunition. Shortages also existed in heavy socks and gloves. The issue gloves were not adequate for the cold, freezing weather. As a result the men's feet and hands were cold and damp. Constant command supervision was necessary to avoid trench foot. (38)

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- (34) A-6
 - (35) A-7
 - (36) A-6
 - (37) Personal knowledge
 - (38) Personal knowledge

The Germans were strong in armor and in combat experience. Their morale was high due to the high degree of success gained in their initial Ardennes attack. The enemy was better equipped for winter fighting. These advantages were offset by the weakness of their infantry strength. In general, the situation was that of a light infantry unit without offensive antitank weapons attacking a combat wise infantry tank team. (39)

TERRAIN AND WEATHER

The country around Flamierge consisted of a continuous range of fairly uniform hills with scattered woods. This broken terrain formed a series of cross compartments and was favorable for reverse slope defense. The weather varied from snow to sleet but it was always freezing. The snow was from 12 to 18 inches deep. This snow canalized armored movement to the roads and made the small towns within the valleys important strongpoints.

NARRATION

At 0745 hours on 4 January 1945, Company C was ready to attack the town of Flamierge. The day was cloudy with fair visibility. It had stopped snowing and to the front beyond the woods was spread a white unmarked blanket of snow. The artillery forward observers had not arrived. The tanks had not arrived. The Air Corps was not flying. The medics were busy evacuating the seven men wounded by enemy artillery fire during the night. The infantry moved forward at 0800 hours without artillery or tank support. (40)

The men of Company C could not see Flamierge as they moved from the cover of the woods. The 1st and 3d Platoons moved about 400 yards through the snow and crossed the crest of a slight hill. The town of Flamierge was 700 yards to the front. (41) (See Map D)

Immediately, German artillery fire landed upon the company. Most of this fire went over the heads of the 1st and 3d Platoons and hit the 2d

(39) A-5, p. 394

(40) A-6, Personal knowledge

(41) Personal knowledge

Platoon in its support position at the edge of the woods. (42)

The 1st and 3d Platoons continued walking through the snow, hitting the ground only when necessary. The 2d Platoon was still under artillery fire waiting for the order to move forward. (43)

The company commander, Captain Kendricks, and his command group, consisting of messengers and radio operators, received a direct hit by a German 88 as they followed the assault platoons. The company commander was wounded and the company radio was destroyed. Communication was out between battalion and Company C. Captain Kendricks was evacuated. (44)

1st Lt. John Hornyak, company executive officer, took command of the company and decided to move the support platoon forward behind the 1st Platoon to cover the open right (east) flank. At that moment, Lt. Hornyak was wounded by artillery fragments and evacuated. (45)

Meanwhile the two assault platoons continued to move forward. The platoon leaders were unaware of the situation to the rear. The 1st and 3d Platoons moved to within 500 yards of the town of Flamierge when they were taken under small arms, mortar, and machine-gun fire from the right flank and from the outskirts of Flamierge. The 1st and 3d Platoons were in a desperate situation for they were caught on a 10 degree slope. Their dark clothing outline them against the white snow. The Germans were defending on the reverse slope. (46)

The 1st and 3d Platoons returned the fire. Each platoon had 4 light machine guns and one 60mm mortar. The light machine guns and the mortars were disposed to the rear of the platoons and they opened fire over the heads of the pinned down 1st and 3d Platoons.

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- (42) Personal knowledge
 - (43) Personal knowledge
 - (44) Personal knowledge
 - (45) Personal knowledge
 - (46) Personal knowledge

The platoon leaders of the 1st and 3d Platoons started the movement forward by getting up and running about 25 yards to the front. By small groups the platoons moved forward and built up a firing line on the platoon leaders. (47)

The platoons moved forward in this manner for 150 yards. This was a very costly move. The Germans were able to concentrate their small-arms fire on the men outlined against the snow, and to add to the destruction, the artillery fire which had been landing to the rear started to fall upon the assault platoons. (48)

It was at this time that the platoon leaders of the assault platoons separated by 150 yards. Neither knew of the other's actions, but at the same time they both got up, signaled forward, and went running toward the town of Flamierge. The men of both platoons watched the platoon leaders cover the first 50 yards. Seeing that they were not going to stop, the troops followed them toward Flamierge. Only the dead and wounded stayed behind. (49)

After a brief, bitter fight, the line of departure was reached and the outskirts of Flamierge taken. The cost was high. Lt. Mahoney, assistant platoon leader of the 3d Platoon, was killed. Sgt. Griffin, squad leader of the 3d Platoon, was killed. One sergeant and two men from the 1st Platoon were killed and a total of 19 men wounded.

The Germans also paid a high price; 22 were killed and 12 taken prisoner. (50)

Company B had moved forward toward the high ground west of Flamierge until taken under heavy artillery fire. Instead of continuing the attack, Company B slid behind the 1st and 3d Platoons of C Company as they made

(47) Personal knowledge
(48) Personal knowledge
(49) Personal knowledge
(50) Personal knowledge

their assault and took cover along the road. Company B dug in and stayed in this position throughout the action. This left the 1st and 3d Platoons spearheading the battalion attack with both flanks open and uncovered. (51)

The attack at the edge of Flamierge had not stopped. The 3d Platoon leader had been slightly wounded during the attack, but he took one squad and fought his way up a hedgerow, placing flanking fire on the buildings while his other two squads hit them from the front. This combination of frontal attack and flanking fire proved very successful. The buildings were secured without casualties. (52)

After reaching the end of the hedgerow, the platoon leader of the 3d Platoon found that the town was split into two main parts. The platoon leader set up a position between the upper and lower parts of Flamierge and placed fire on those Germans trying to escape to the German-occupied portion of town. (53)

The 1st Platoon, under Lt. Ronan C. Grady, also continued the attack without halting. The 1st Platoon fought from house-to-house, driving the Germans into the fire of the squad in position between the two sections of the town. In this manner the main part of Flamierge was taken by two platoons. The German artillery and mortar fire ceased after the assault was launched. The resistance in the town came from small groups of enemy riflemen fighting from building to building. Snipers were plentiful within the area. (54)

It was at this moment, before the 1st and 3d Platoons had time to reorganize, that the first enemy counterattack struck. German infantry, supported by self-propelled guns firing from the upper portion of the town, counterattacked the squad in position between the two sections of the town.

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- (51) Personal knowledge
 - (52) Personal knowledge
 - (53) Personal knowledge
 - (54) Personal knowledge

German artillery and mortar fire supported this attack. After a 20 minute fire fight , which carried to within 25 yards of the position, this attack was repulsed by the squad from the 3d Platoon. This time the Germans were outlined against the snow and the Americans were in previously prepared German positions. Casualties were heavy. Two men were killed and one wounded. The 3d Platoon Leader was hit for the second time and evacuated. (55)

The support platoon in the woods was still waiting for orders. Lt. Bailey, platoon leader, told his platoon sergeant to hold the platoon in position while he and a runner went forward to contact the 1st and 3d Platoons. Lt. Bailey reached the edge of Flamierge when he was wounded by a sniper and evacuated. (56)

Meanwhile in Flamierge Lt. Grady reorganized the 1st and 3d Platoons and placed the 3d Platoon on the right and the 1st Platoon on the left in defensive positions. The platoons were under constant artillery fire. Direct fire from self-propelled 88s was received from the upper half of Flamierge. The platoons were short on rifle grenade and rocket launcher ammunition. These weapons were restricted to tank targets at under 50 yards range. Two tanks from the 11th Armored Division arrived in Flamierge. These tanks attempted to take the self-propelled guns under fire. Both tanks were knocked out and one was set on fire. (57)

Major Kies, battalion executive officer, arrived in Flamierge, talked to Lt. Grady (the only officer left in Company C), visited the aid station, talked to the wounded, and went back to the battalion command post. The battalion commander was 1500 yards to the rear and remained there during the action.

(55) Personal knowledge
(56) Personal knowledge
(57) Personal knowledge

The company aid men were operating the aid station in a building in Flamierge. Evacuation was accomplished by loading the wounded on a 1/4-ton jeep and sending them to the rear. Those wounded that could walk were formed into combat wounded detachments and sent to the rear under the command of the senior in each group. This was necessary because the route to the rear was under constant German fire. The ambulance 1/4-ton was not able to transport all the wounded. Each time it returned a selection was made and those in greatest need of medical attention were sent back to the battalion aid station. The battalion surgeon came forward several times, checked the aid station, talked to the men in their fox holes, and returned to the rear. (59)

At 1200 hours the battalion commander committed his reserve company to take the high ground east of Flamierge. Captain John Spears, company commander of Company A, moved out with his 2d and 3d Platoons abreast and his 1st Platoon in support. Leading elements of the company had just reached the Bastogne highway when they were taken under fire by 6 tanks supported by infantry. This German tank-infantry force was apparently a counter-attacking force moving out to attack the 1st and 3d Platoons of Company C. Once again it was infantry without antitank support against an infantry tank team. Captain Spears disposed Company A in a defensive position and notified the battalion commander of his action. Colonel James Coutts, regimental commander, was at the battalion command post when the message came through. The regimental commander ordered Captain Spears to hold his position. Withdrawal orders were received later and Company A returned to its original reserve position. (60)

(59) Personal knowledge
(60) A-7

The 1st and 3d Platoons of Company C continued to resist German counter-attacks during this period. At 1300 hours the artillery fire increased and, when it lifted, an aggressive infantry attack supported by 6 tanks was launched against the 3d Platoon's position. This attack was stopped. Only one rocket launcher team was left in action. This team was commanded by Private Floyd Davis who had received two machine gun bullets through his canteen during the engagement. Lt. Grady refused to take cover during the counterattacks; he walked from position to position talking to the men and adjusting their fire.

(61)

At 1400 hours another counterattack was launched against the 3d Platoon. This attack was stopped, but only after the 1st Platoon was employed against the German attack in support of the 3d Platoon. Lt. Grady was hit by direct fire from the German tanks supporting the attack and received 17 fragments in his body. (62)

The senior non-commissioned officer, Sergeant Collins, took command of the two platoons and consolidated them into one platoon. At this time the 1/4-ton jeep taking wounded to the rear was hit and destroyed by direct tank fire. The road to the rear was now under German control. The aid station was overflowing with casualties.

At 1500 hours the Germans, after a violent artillery preparation, launched an infantry tank attack on the consolidated platoon. The last rocket launcher was hit by direct 88 fire at 50 yards and destroyed. The gunner, Private Davis, was killed. The platoon was overrun. Flamierge was once again in German hands.

On 7 January, 1945, Flamierge was taken and held by the 518th Parachute Infantry after all units within the regiment had been committed in the attack. (63)

(61) Personal knowledge
(62) Personal knowledge
(63) Personal knowledge

General Middleton, VIII Corps commander, stated that the 17th Airborne Division took excessive losses during the Ardennes campaign for the following reasons:

- (1) The Germans attacked with their best troops in the salient commanded by their most skillful commander (General Reimer).
- (2) The 17th Airborne Division troops were aggressive to the point of recklessness.
- (3) The tank destroyer units supporting the 17th Airborne Division were under strength, and one section assigned to cover the main axis of the enemy's advance on the road northwest toward Bastogne deserted its post and retreated into Bastogne. (64)

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. INTELLIGENCE

It was well known by all members of Company C that information regarding the enemy must be collected and sent to the rear for evaluation and interpretation. The division and regimental sources of this information are the troops, particularly reconnaissance and observation units, both ground and air, technical intelligence teams, and liaison with higher, lower and adjacent units. This includes coordination with units about to be relieved. On 1 January, the 17th Airborne Division was ordered to attack through the 11th Armored Division on 3 January 1945. This attack date was later changed to 4 January 1945. Intelligence as to the enemy strength, composition, and dispositions was available at the 101st Airborne Division and at the 11th Armored Division. Both of these units had engaged the enemy and taken prisoners. It is not known that intelligence was obtained from these units.

(64) A-5, p. 394

It is known that intelligence regarding the enemy did not reach Company C before the attack on 4 January 1945. Instead, the battalion attack order hinted at easy resistance. The opposite was true. The commander is responsible for the dissemination of intelligence to appropriate higher, lower, and adjacent units. This intelligence is needed by all units to avoid surprise and to arrive at sound decisions. It is felt that the attack and defense of Flamierge would have been executed in a more efficient manner had accurate intelligence of the enemy been available.

2. LEADERSHIP

The aggressive, forceful attack of the 1st and 3d Platoons of Company C against Flamierge was the direct result of forceful leadership by the platoon leaders. However, it is felt that leadership was lacking at battalion level. When Company B stalled in its attack and slid behind Company C, it was the responsibility of the battalion commander to correct the situation. When all of the officers of Company C were killed or wounded, it was the responsibility of the battalion commander to make adjustments in personnel. When opportunity offers and when his presence at the command post is not essential, it is the job of the battalion commander to visit his units in order to inspire confidence and to assure himself that his orders are being carried out. During the decisive phase of battle the commander should be near the critical point of action. The critical point of action was certainly the attack and defense of Flamierge by Company C. The battalion executive officer came forward into Flamierge and saw the situation, however, no action was taken to make corrections. In my opinion, failure of the battalion commander to exercise personal leadership and supervision resulted in the loss of Flamierge to the enemy.

3. OPERATION ORDERS

The division received the attack order on 1 January 1945. The first indication that Company C had that it was to attack or defend was received

by Captain Robert C. Kendricks at 0200 hours on 4 January when he went to receive the battalion attack order. The battalion attack order was finished at 0400 hours on 4 January. The attack was to be launched over strange terrain at 0800 hours on 4 January. This left Captain Kendricks four hours to reconnoiter, to estimate the situation, to prepare his order, and to issue the company attack order. Daylight was at 0700 hours this left one hour of visibility for both company and platoon use. It is not felt that sufficient time was allotted to the companies and platoons to prepare for the attack. It is believed that the objective could have been taken with less casualties if more time had been allotted the smaller units. Commanders must arrange their time so that sufficient time remains for the company commanders and platoon leaders to plan their attack. Certainly, the success of divisions and armies depends upon the success of the platoons and the companies.

4. SUPPLY AND EVACUATION

Flamierge was retaken by the Germans because of the inability of light infantry to fight off repeated infantry tank counterattacks without a sufficient supply of rocket launcher ammunition. The Germans did not press their attack home until the last rocket launcher had been destroyed and the gunner killed. However, before this incident, the effectiveness of the defense was reduced due to the shortage of rocket launcher ammunition. The gunners were forced to wait and fire only when the German tanks were about to overrun the position. Before the attack on Flamierge, shortages existed in rocket launcher ammunition. No provision was made to resupply the company with this ammunition, although it was known that this was the only antitank weapon available to the company. Casualties could not be evacuated as fast as they were received. Company C had no organic transportation. It is felt that transportation should have been assigned for ammunition resupply and for casualty evacuation. Certainly, an adequate

supply of rocket launcher ammunition would have increased the effectiveness of the defense.

5. WINTER CLOTHING

Before the attack on Flamierge, shortages existed in overshoes, socks, and gloves. The issue gloves were not adequate for winter operations. Certainly, this detracted from the combat efficiency of the individual soldier during the attack and defense of Flamierge. In winter operations, every effort must be made to obtain adequate clothing and equipment. Frozen hands and trench foot do not strengthen a unit's combat efficiency. Lack of gloves, socks, and overshoes in winter operations add an additional burden to the tasks of the small unit leader. Not only must he lead his unit in combat but he must constantly supervise and inspect each individual man for frozen hands and trench foot. Losses due to enemy fire can seldom be entirely overcome, but losses due to inadequate clothing and equipment are not excusable.

6. COMPANY SUPPORTING WEAPONS

The enemy situation prior to the attack on Flamierge was extremely vague. The only mortars under company control were the three 60mm mortars. While the mortars were organic platoon weapons, they were also trained to fire as a battery under company control. It is felt that in such a situation where information of the enemy is vague, a more efficient use of the mortars would be to keep them under company control. Once an action starts, a commander has only three methods of influencing it. One of these is the use of supporting fires. As a result of the decision to leave the mortars with the platoons, only two mortars were employed in the attack and defense of Flamierge. The 2d Platoon's mortar did not participate in the action. It is felt that the most efficient employment of the mortars would have been to keep them under company control, firing as a battery.

7. SUPPORTING ARMS

The battalion and company attack orders promised artillery support, tank support, and air support. Impossible flying weather prevented the tactical air from flying. Company C moved out on the attack without artillery support and without tank support. Nothing will throw an infantry attack off stride as quickly as to promise it support which is not promptly delivered. The town of Flamierge was taken without the promised support but with unnecessary loss of life. Flamierge could have been held if the 14 battalions of artillery had supported Company C's defense of it. The failure of the forward observers to arrive resulted in the loss of the town of Flamierge to the Germans.

LESSONS

1. Intelligence of the enemy must be disseminated to all units within a command.
2. Aggressive leadership by all echelons of command is essential to success in battle.
3. Operation orders must be disseminated in time to permit subordinate commanders a maximum time to reconnoiter, to estimate the situation, and to issue their order.
4. When an airborne division is employed on a ground mission, special measures must be taken to provide non-organic transportation for ammunition resupply and casualty evacuation.
5. Adequate clothing and equipment must be provided during winter operations.
6. Supporting weapons must arrive in time to support infantry in the attack.
7. When intelligence of the enemy is vague, company supporting weapons should be employed in general support of the company.