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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY G, 22D INFANTRY
(4TH INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE ST. LO
BREAKTHROUGH 31 JULY - 1 AUGUST 1944.
(NORTHERN FRANCE CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY COMPANY ATTACHED
TO AN ARMORED DIVISION TO EFFECT A BREAKTHROUGH

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

"The same mechanical processes that produce wire, artillery, or the machine gun could also produce tanks. These tanks could roll down the wire fields, and men could follow."

(1) The quotation stated is from the book "Modern Arms and Free Men", written by Dr. Vannevar Bush and describes how the great land deadlock of World War I, in his opinion, could have quickly been broken had tanks and men been so employed. It is on the same tenor that this monograph describes the operations of Company G, 22d Infantry, 4th Infantry Division, attached to Combat Command A, 2d Armored Division, in the ST. LO breakthrough.

A description of the major events prior to the operation to be described will assist in the orientation of the reader.

The Allied landings of 6 June 1944 were successful in establishing the necessary beachhead, and by the end of June, the avenues of supply between CHERBOURG, captured 26 June, and the mouth of the ORNE RIVER were adequate. (2) (See Map A)

The 4th Infantry Division, composed of the 8th, 12th, and 22d Infantry Regiments, had participated in the initial landings on UTAH BEACH and the drive to CHERBOURG. (See Map A)

The weather, terrain, and the tenacity of the enemy com-

(1) A-6, p. 11

(2) A-1, p. 266

bined to present the possibility of a stalemate on the COTENTIN PENINSULA. To prevent this stalemate, General Dwight D. Eisenhower, Supreme Commander of the Allied Forces, on 30 June, made the decision that a breakthrough would be made from the NORMANDY BEACHHEAD. The main effort would be made by the U. S. First Army, commanded by General Omar Bradley, from positions in the vicinity of ST. LO. (3) (See Map A)

The Allied Forces in all subsequent actions were building up reserves and battling for positions for the forthcoming breakthrough operation. (4) On 18 July the U. S. First Army was ready for the operation; however, the actual "D Day" was to be determined by the weather. (5)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

The U. S. First Army plan, appropriately labeled "COBRA", required the VII Corps, under the command of General Lawton Collins, to make the main effort on a very narrow front. (6) The composition, initial dispositions and objectives of the VII Corps to include units opposing enemy forces are shown on Map B.

"COBRA" was to be divided into three phases. Phase One was to include intense aerial bombardment of an area 2500 yards deep and 6000 yards wide with the northern edge along the ST. LO - PERIERS ROAD. Phase Two was to move two Armored Divisions, accompanied by motorized Infantry, through the gaps created by the infantry divisions. Phase Three would consist of the Corps executing increasing pressure, and exploiting

(3) A-1, p. 268
(4) A-1, p. 268
(5) A-5, p. 99
(6) A-4, p. 11

every advantage against the enemy. (7)

The 22d Regimental Combat Team was relieved from the lines in the vicinity of RAIDS, reverting to Division Reserve. A rehabilitation program was conducted for the following period until 19 July, at which time the RCT was alerted for a motor move to LA MINE. (8) (See Map B)

It was upon the closing in LA MINE that the personnel of the RCT were informed that they were to be attached to Combat Command A of the 2d Armored Division. The mission assigned to the RCT was that of the role of armored infantry in close support of the tanks, and certainly a new one for the RCT. (9)

The organization for combat of Combat Command A is shown in Chart A. An understanding of this organization will assist the reader in grasping the flexibility of the forthcoming operation.

The period of 19-25 July, the interim waiting for the weather, was utilized for rehearsing tank-infantry teamwork. A mutual understanding of each others capabilities and limitations, a status that did not exist at the outset, resulted in this pre-operational training. (10)

The final preparations included the issuing of additional small arms ammunition to the infantry elements. This ammunition was to be carried on the accompanying tanks and would not be an additional load to the individual infantryman. From the outset it was obvious that everything was being done to provide the proper logistical support, and that the status of supply was to be adequate. The only critical shortage that exist-

(7) A-5, p. 97

(8) A-7, p. 2

(9) A-7, p. 2

(10) Personal knowledge

ed was that of magazines for the Browning Automatic Rifles. (11)

The enemy opposing the striking Allied Forces was greatly understrength, but it was certain that he would take every advantage of the general rolling terrain that was sub-divided by hedgerows. The G-2 estimate stated that the enemy was capable of reinforcing with additional armor within three days after the beginning of the operation. (12)

On 25 July the weather cleared, with accompanying mild temperatures, and Phase One was effected with many unnecessary Allied casualties because of "shorts". (13) The date of 26 July began the operation of Phase Two. CCA advanced on this date to accomplish its previously assigned missions. On 28 July, CCA consolidated its positions in vicinity of MOYEN and DENISIERE which was the beginning of Phase Three. (See Map C)

The XIX Corps, on 28 July, assumed operational control of CCA, and immediately assigned CCA the mission of capturing the high ground in vicinity of PERCY. (See Map C)

VILLEBAUDON was captured on 30 July after much bitter fighting; however, advanced elements had been cut off in the vicinity of PERCY. It was only after severe fighting that these elements assembled again in the vicinity of VILLEBAUDON.

General Rose, sensing that he would be unable to accomplish his assigned mission if his columns were cut off by enemy armored forces from the east, asked and received permission to concentrate his main efforts on the key ford of the VIRE RIVER at TESSY SUR VIRE. (See Map C) (14)

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- (11) Personal knowledge
(12) A-4, p. 13
(13) A-8, p. 37
(14) A-4, p. 15

DISPOSITIONS AND PLANS OF THE 2D BATTALION, 22D INFANTRY

On 30 July the 2d Battalion had been engaged in extensive patrolling both by tank-infantry teams and foot infantry patrols. The battalion and the 1st Tank Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment to whom it was attached, closed in an assembly area in the vicinity of MOYEN at approximately 1900 hours. (See Map D) The tactical situation at this time was very flexible, and it was not actually known what mission the battalion was to be given on 31 July. (15)

The company commander of Company G was notified by runner to report to the Battalion CP at 2000 hours to receive orders assigning a new mission. Upon arriving at the CP, the company commander was notified that his company would move by truck to the CP of CCA in the vicinity of VILIEBAUDON. The mission was to protect the CP of CCA which at the time was felt to be inadequately protected.

SITUATION OF COMPANY G

The strength of Company G was approximately 120 men and four officers. Approximately 80% of the personnel were products of the replacement system. The "hedgerow" fighting of June and part of July had proven very costly; however, the rehabilitation program prior to the current operation and light casualties thus far resulted in excellent morale and combat effectiveness. It must be noted that the personnel of this company were "sold" on the efficiency of the 1st Battalion of the 66th Tank Battalion. (16)

The hedgerows continued to plague the personnel of Com-

(15) Personal knowledge

(16) Personal knowledge

pany G. A hedgerow is the ancient result of the natives of NORMANDY clearing their fields of rocks to enable them to cultivate their land. These rocks were stacked in rows, and in the ensuing time hedges have grown from them. The results were innumerable small sections of land surrounded by hedgerows varying from a foot to eight feet in height. These "minature cross compartments" favored the defense because they restricted maneuver of the attacking infantry and armor. The enemy had succeeded in fortifying these hedgerows by digging deep fox holes connected by an elaborate network of trenches. A few well placed enemy with automatic weapons were capable of momentarily stopping the advance of a rifle company.

As stated, the hedgerow had also proved to be a detriment to armor. The tanks were principally roadbound, and, if they were able to traverse a hedgerow they would expose their lightly armored "bellies". The result was, of course, an especially lucrative target to "tank-hunting" teams. The best defense against this type of enemy action proved to be the close support provided by the tank-infantry team.

The weather continued clear and mild. There were no restrictions for either Allied or enemy air support resulting from the weather conditions during this period.

The Allied Forces were operating on the British Double Summertime which gave very few hours of darkness. Daylight was approximately 0430 hours, and darkness approximately 2300 hours.

The enemy facing Company G was the remnants of the famous 2d Panzer Division, and other numerous units caught in the swift

advance of the Allies. The morale of the enemy can best be described by quoting an interrogation report which is as follows: (17)

"Most PWs of the scattered units had access to a circular of Hitler's speech distributed by the Whermacht indicating the attempt of his life. The PWs did not know anything further of the internal revolt. In general morale is not too high because of the effectiveness of our artillery and bomb concentrations. They do not see how Germany can win the war without the LUFTWAFFE."

The enemy's main line of defense was the employment of strongpoints composed of tanks, anti-tank guns, and limited infantry armed with numerous small arms weapons. A "hit and run" attack could be expected from the LUFTWAFFE during the hours of darkness.

The status of supply for the Company was excellent. Resupply was effected each night with the supply personnel operating under the supervision of the Supply Officer of CCA. Combat rations of the "C" and "K" type were consumed during the operation because the flexibility of the situation did not warrant the release of the company kitchen truck from the Field Trains.

FINAL PREPARATION FOR ACTION

The company commander returned to the Company CP, and the information was passed to the platoon leaders to alert their platoons for the coming move. The six trucks of the army truck company were arranged and each platoon assigned its trucks. Or-

(17) A-10

der of March: 1st Platoon, Company Headquarters, 2d Platoon, Weapons Platoon, and 3d Platoon.

A liaison officer from CCA arrived and at approximately 2330 hours, the company departed for its new assignment. (See Map D)

NARRATION

The liaison officer leading the column was not sure of the returning route, and the column became lost several times. Each stop resulted in the infantry unloading to provide local security while the liaison officer and the company commander made reconnaissance to locate the correct route.

The column was approaching VILLEBAUDON when suddenly the entire area was lighted by flares dropped from enemy planes. The march was immediately stopped, and personnel dispersed to the cover of the ditches along the road.

The "hit and run" raid lasted for approximately 5 minutes and resulted in no damage or casualties to the column. The column had apparently not been observed by the enemy. When the "all clear" was apparent, the company commander gave the order to load up and to continue the march.

Upon completion of the loading it was found that two of the drivers were still missing. A search of the area found them still in the ditches. It was apparent that this was a new experience in combat for them. "On the spot" corrective action was taken by the company commander to include the appointing of assistant drivers. This incident delayed the column for about 15 minutes which finally closed in the CP of CCA at ap-

proximately 31 0100 July.

The liaison officer took the company commander directly to General Rose to inform him that the infantry protection had arrived. The general immediately asked if the liaison officer desired him to place the infantry in a defensive position. A hasty and embarrassed exit resulted for the liaison officer and the company commander.

The company commander was then taken to the building in which the CP of the 22d Infantry Regiment was located and he reported to Captain Jack Kent who was the S-1. Captain Kent took the company commander on a reconnaissance, and between them they worked out a so called defense plan of the CP. (See Map D)

An old vacated house was found in the approximate center of the area which was quickly converted into a Company CP. The rifle platoons were placed in a circle around the outside area, and were connected by visiting patrols. Communications were established by the use of soundpowered telephones, both to the platoons and to the building in which the CP of the 22d Infantry was located. It is to be noted that this entire operation was done without prior reconnaissance, and during the hours of darkness. No actual information of the enemy was available to the company, and the mission of other than general protection was never received. (18)

The company commander was awakened about 0300 hours by a firefight from the vicinity of the platoon that was closest to the MENSIL HERMAN-VILLEBAUDON ROAD. An inspection revealed that the "enemy" was the elements of the 28th Infantry Divi-

(18) Personal knowledge

sion. These units had become lost while marching south on the MENSIL HERMAN-VILLEBAUDON ROAD. There were fortunately no casualties in the ensuing firefight. The "penetration" of the 28th Infantry Division proved to the company commander that his defense was not too effective. Remedial action was effected to the best of the company's ability, and the remainder of the night passed without incident.

A runner from the Regimental CP informed the company commander that the company would be alerted to join and ride the tanks of Company A, 66th Armored Regiment, as they passed the CP. This information was received at 0900 hours.

The armored column composed of the 1st Tank Battalion and the 2d Battalion, 22d Infantry Regiment (less Company G) passed the CP at 0930 hours. Company A stopped and picked up Company G. The two companies closed into an assembly area at 1030 hours. (See Map D) The company commander reported to the mounted CP for instructions.

Major Drake, commanding officer of the infantry battalion, gave the following oral order: (19)

"The tank battalion will attack along the VILLEBAUDON-TESSY SUR VIRE ROAD axis with the mission of capturing TESSY SUR VIRE. Each of our companies will be attached to a tank company to provide close continuous support. Captain Harrison, S-3, will give you the order of march and attachments."

Captain Harrison stated the tank battalion was to attack in a line of companies, echeloned to the right. Company B of the tanks was to be the leading unit supported by Company F of the infantry. Company A, supported by Company G, was to be

(19) Personal knowledge

the second tank company in line. Company E of the infantry and its supported tank company was to be the third unit in line. Company H of the infantry was to move under battalion control. The infantry commanders were instructed again that they were under the command of the tank company commanders and that they must give close support at all times. In essence, they were told that they would ride the tanks until "knocked off". (20)

The company commander returned to Company A where his platoons were mounted on the tanks. The necessary information was given to the platoons concerned. It was the judgment of the company commander that the weapons platoon and CP personnel of the company would move with Company H. They would not accompany the rifle platoons in the initial assault. The CP personnel that remained in the rear included the executive officer and the 1st Sergeant. Any desired communication with the company CP would be relayed either through the tank radio net or the infantry battalion CP. This was necessary because there was only one SCR 300 available (the company commander's set) and the SCR 536's had already proved inadequate, because of the increased distances between units.

The company commander, with the two radio operators (one alternate) and runners, would ride the tank of the tank company commander. The rifle platoons were attached to the tank platoons accordingly, with the platoon leaders of each rifle platoon riding the tank platoon leaders tank. This organization was thought to be the most efficient for control because there were no available means of communication between leaders other than arm and hand signals, and the exterior tank tele-

(20) Personal knowledge

phones.

Company A crossed the line of departure at approximately 1200 hours. The line of departure, which was the VILLEBAUDON-PERCY ROAD promised a quick advance. This, however, was short lived.

As the lead tanks approached the road running south from the small group of buildings known as BEAUCOUDRAY, they came under intense and severe artillery barrages from the high ground to the south. (See Map D) Company G infantry quickly dismounted from the tanks and took cover in the adjacent hedgerows.

It was obvious the enemy was interdicting the BEAUCOUDRAY ROAD. The company commander decided that the best place for his three platoons was to the east of this road, and on the reverse slope of the terrain adjacent to the VILLEBAUDON-TESSY SUR VIRE ROAD. Before this movement could be effected, one man was killed and six wounded.

The infantrymen finally crossed the road and took up positions among the holes that had obviously been constructed by the enemy, and later occupied by friendly forces. The latter was evidenced by a dead soldier wearing the patch of the 29th Infantry Division. This was the first information the company commander had had the 29th was operating in the same sector.

The tanks of Company A were finally successful in crossing the BEAUCOUDRAY ROAD without receiving a casualty, and took up positions in the same locality of the infantry. One tank, however, was lost when it turned over while traversing a very high hedgerow within the infantry area. It was ironical that this tank was a new replacement, and had not fired a shot in "anger". (21)

(21) Personal knowledge

Intermittent artillery continued to fall generally from the south. Any action across the BEAUCOUDRAY ROAD would result in increased enemy fire, and for all practical purposes the two lead tank companies of A and B were cut off from the remaining companies to the west of the road.

The company commander contacted the infantry battalion CP and talked to Captain Harrison giving him the current situation. The company commander was instructed to hold, and to keep the CP informed.

Lt. Claing, commanding Company F, was contacted on the SCR 300 to see what was the cause of the delay in the advance of the column. The company commander was informed by Lt. Claing that an enemy strongpoint to the front along the TESSY ROAD approximately 600 yards to the east was offering strong resistance. The strong point was a stone house around which a tank and infantry were placed. Also, enemy tanks advancing from the vicinity of TESSY were engaging the tanks of Company B. An air strike on the strongpoint was requested of the continuous air cover of P 47's. (See Map D)

The cerise orange ground panels designating friendly forces were ordered displayed along the line held by Company G. This was a precaution against the requested air strike of Company F.

In approximately 5 minutes after the conversation with Lt. Claing the P-47s could be seen dive bombing and strafing the strongpoint. This was certainly a morale factor to the friendly forces.

In the meanwhile light mortar fire was now being received from the northwest. The company commander immediately re-

ported this information to battalion, because the area from which the fire was being received had been reported in friendly hands.

At 1700 hours a platoon from the 175th Infantry Regiment advanced across the TESSY ROAD from the north. The company commander upon questioning the platoon leader discovered this was the second day that the platoon leader had attacked on this particular terrain. They had also been given the mission of attacking and capturing TESSY SUR VIRE. His platoon continued its advance, which for some unknown reason, was in the direction of PERCY and not TESSY SUR VIRE. It was obvious to the company commander that the situation was now getting very flexible; but, at least no more mortar fire was received from the northwest.

The company commander and the commander of Company A with the absence of other instructions, decided that it was best that an all around defense should be effected if they were to remain for the night. Information was passed through the tank radio net to have the weapons platoon of Company G report to the company commander in his present location.

The company commander contacted the battalion to give the status of the company and to state the future plans. He was told that his weapons platoon leader had been wounded, and that they did not know the whereabouts of the platoon at the present time. The company commander requested that battalion attempt to contact the Company CP and locate the "lost platoon".

Lt. Fisher, 1st Platoon Leader, and the company commander when on a reconnaissance, found a destroyed jeep of the 24th Cavalry Squadron in a ditch along the TESSY ROAD. The signif-

importance of this discovery was the fact that a light machine gun was in tact in the vehicle. In the absence of the company light machine guns of the weapons platoon, this gun was placed in the defense of the company.

Artillery continued to fall during the preparation of the defense and casualties mounted, though fortunately not rapidly. The defense, which the company commander was to find out in later years would warrant a "U" in defense tactics, was completed. (See Map D)

A major from the 24th Cavalry Squadron contacted the company commander and told him that his unit was to take over the defense of this position for the night. This information received at 2000 hours, was passed on to the tank company commander. By this time he had also received the same information from his battalion commander. They were to pull back to an assembly area just west of the BEAUCOUDRAY ROAD.

The relief was effected during the remaining hours of day light and was completed at approximately 2230 hours. (See Map D) For the days operation Company G had had one man killed, and approximately 12 wounded including one officer. The evacuation of the wounded had been efficiently handled by the tank battalion's aid station.

The enemy had proved too strong on 31 July, and the tank-infantry elements of CCA returned to an assembly area to "lick their wounds".

Sgt. Slater, the company supply sergeant, arrived in the new assembly area with the Class I rations, and the mail. The resupplying at night continued to be effective.

The platoons, to include the "lost" weapons platoon, were reorganized, resupplied, and instructed to get some sleep for the remainder of the night. Fortunately, there was no mission, other than that of local security, assigned to the company. The night passed without incident, other than a nightmare had by 1st Sergeant Kenyon who was sleeping in the same foxhole with the company commander.

The day of 1 August dawned clear and mild. The men of Company G did not know the mission ahead of them. This absence of information, however, was not long lived, for the company commander was instructed to report to the mobile CP.

Upon arriving at the CP the attack orders for the day were given. Captain Harrison, in essence, gave the following information:

"We, again, continue the attack to capture TESSY. CCA is now attached to the 29th Infantry Division, and we will make a coordinated attack with them. (22) The same tank-infantry attachments of yesterday continue to be effective. Company A and Company G are the leading elements today. A line of departure and formation will be decided as the situation develops".

This information was transmitted to the platoon leaders. The company commander ordered that all the platoons were to be in the initial assault. The CP personnel of the company were to ride the rear tanks, and the company commander was to be located again with the tank company commander.

The remainder of the morning was utilized by the infantry in cleaning weapons, while the final preparations for the at-

(22) A-11, p. 1

tack were made by the armored elements. The tank column left the assembly area at approximately 1300 hours and moved east on the VILLEBAUDON-TESSY SUR VIRE ROAD. (See Map E)

The column passed the strongpoint that had been knocked out by the friendly air the previous day. It was upon close inspection of the strongpoint that there was revealed one wounded enemy that had been left by his comrades. The enemy was fighting a desperate struggle, and was determined to keep TESSY ROAD open.

As the leading elements approached RF 103, a "dud" from a high velocity weapon struck the trees above the road. The column was immediately stopped, and the infantry dismounted. Major Landon Cox, the executive officer of the 1st Tank Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment, and the company commander went to the head of the column.

The company commander was instructed by Major Cox to send a patrol in a direction from which the "dud" had come. To accomplish this Sgt. MacVarnish, Platoon Sergeant of the 2d Platoon, and two men were sent on the patrol. In a few minutes they reported back and stated that enemy tanks were in hull defilade along the TESSY ROAD about 1000 yards to the east of RJ 103. (See Map E) The forward observer of the artillery (located in one of the lead tanks) immediately began calling for fire on the enemy tanks.

In the meanwhile, the company commander was instructed to send a patrol along the road that ran south from RJ 103. Lt. Fisher was given this mission for it was thought that in this area the forthcoming attack would be made.

The tanks and accompanying infantry were given the order

to disperse to the south of the TESSY ROAD, and be prepared for an attack to the east at 1500 hours. A line south from RJ 103 was generally held by the 29th Infantry Division, to whom CCA was attached, and was to be the line of departure. (23) (See Map E) Artillery, intense in nature, received indicated that the enemy was aware of the tank concentrations. These concentrations prevented freedom of movement, although coordination with the 175th was completed.

Lt. Fisher returned from his patrol as the company was mounting the tanks in preparation for the attack. His information was not encouraging, for he had observed enemy machine gun nests along the road from RJ 103 as it turned and ran east to TESSY. The lack of time prevented this information being disseminated to the tank elements. (24)

The attack crossed the line of departure on time, and from the outset it was to be an action of fire and movement. (25) The tanks moved through the gaps in the hedgerows cut by the leading tanks which were equipped with "hedgerow cutters". This cutter was very much like a giant spading fork welded on the front plate of the tank which would permit the tank in a lunge to gouge its way through the hedgerows. (26)

The infantry of Company G were soon knocked from their tanks and discovered that they had advanced too far. The machine gun fire from the positions reported by Lt. Fisher caught them in open ground and were taking their deadly toll.

At this time, with the majority of the company pinned down by fire, a white flag appeared directly to the front from behind a hedgerow. The company commander immediately thought

(23) Personal knowledge

(24) Personal knowledge

(25) A-4, p. 16

(26) A-2, p. 4

that the flag indicated that the enemy might be attempting to surrender. However, there was nothing that could be done at this time to control the then existing combat activities.

The flag continued to wave, and from the hedgerow came a large French civilian family running crazily toward the friendly lines. Providence was looking over these people for not one was wounded. (27)

The company commander moved forward to better grasp the situation. It was apparent that something must be done to knock out the machine guns that were pinning the platoons in the open ground. (See Map E) The answer was the fires of the tanks if they could be shown the enemy targets.

The status of the platoon leaders and their platoons was unknown at this time, and they were completely dispersed in the confusion that existed. The company commander attempted to direct the fire of the tanks but was seriously wounded by machine gun fire.

Sergeant Kenyon, in rear of the column with the CP, sensed that something was wrong and immediately went forward. He discovered the company commander wounded, and by heroic courage assisted the wounded officer to cover.

It can be stated that complete disorganization existed in the company. In the short violent action, the company had suffered losses which tabulated to six killed and nineteen wounded in action. (28)

Sergeant Kenyon immediately had the executive officer come forward and take command. The new company commander, after being oriented, managed to restore some semblance of organiza-

(27) Personal knowledge
(28) A-11, Inclosure #2

tion for the continuation of the attack.

In the meanwhile the 175th Infantry Regiment began their advance after the tank elements and mounted infantry had passed through their lines. Their progress was rapid, and by maneuvering they were able to knock out the machine guns that were holding up the advance of Company G. (29)

The coordinated attack advanced, and by night the tank and infantry elements were in full command of the high ground west of TESSY SUR VIRE which overlooked the town. (See Map E) The enemy had withdrawn his forces across the VIRE RIVER to the east.

This concluded the aggressive teamwork of the 22d Infantry Regiment and CCA of the 2d Armored Division. The Regiment again reverted to the 4th Infantry Division early on the morning of 2 August. (30)

In summary of the action of Company G for the period of 31 July - 1 August, a description of a situation that included intense aggressive action and movements that kept the subordinate leaders in confusion, is most appropriate. The two day attack failed to accomplish the mission of actually capturing the town of TESSY SUR VIRE. The action did, however, make the VILLEBAUDON-TESSY SUR VIRE axis untenable for the enemy, and forced him to withdraw his forces to the east. Thus, a possible serious counterattack threat was avoided, and the stage was being set for the history making advances of the Allies in their sweep across FRANCE.

It should be noted, in closing, that the 22d Infantry Regiment was awarded Battle Honors as directed by General Order No.

(29) Statement of Lt. P. W. Tawnes, Platoon Leader of Company G, made to the author in November 1944.

(30) A-11, p. 1

14, dated 3 March 1945, for their role of supporting infantry in the operations covered by this monograph.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. AGGRESSIVE TANK-INFANTRY TEAMWORK

The entire operation described was, from the outset, dependent upon aggressive tank-infantry teamwork. In the action of 31 July when the advance of the 1st Battalion, 66th Tank Battalion, was stopped in the vicinity of BEAUCOUDRAY, Company G was in a position to effect a hasty defense; and was prepared to hold for the night, had the situation warranted this action. An infantry company attached to a tank company gives to the shock power of the tank company -- the staying power of the infantry. Thus, a force is created that an enemy will find difficult to contain. The coordinated attack of the date of 1 August finally cracked the defensive positions west of TESSY because the enemy found himself in an untenable position with both tank and infantry striking together. This aggressive teamwork does not exist unless there is a mutual respect and understanding of each others capabilities and limitations. The most certain and quickest way to ascertain this mutual understanding is, if conditions permit, the actual working together and rehearsing of tactics prior to an operation. This procedure is strikingly demonstrated by the pre-operation training of the 1st Battalion, 66th Armored Regiment and Company G during the 19-25 July preparations where both acquired the mutual understanding desired.

2. COMMUNICATIONS

The tank-infantry team presents to the infantry company commander, in many instances, situations of having his platoons widely dispersed while supporting or working with tank platoons. The problem of control is, therefore, greatly increased unless adequate communication facilities are provided. The company commander of Company G realized that the SCR 536 was inadequate, and that he must rely on the communications of the tank company for controlling his platoons. The failure of the weapons platoon to move forward at the desired time is contributed to the absence of radio communication between the company commander and this platoon. The failure to provide Company G with adequate radios (such as the SCR 300 type) for communications to subordinated units hindered the prompt execution of all assignments. The company commander discovered that the external tank telephone was not always adequate for communication to the tank personnel from the ground. The situation that existed after the jump off of 1 August quickly developed into "pin-downed" infantrymen and widely dispersed tanks. The infantrymen were unable to reach the tanks in many instances to use the external phone, and visual signals were not always effective in pointing out targets for the tanks. To correct this situation, it is necessary for the infantry to have radios that net with the accompanying tanks. The presence of radio communication from the infantry to the tank battalion would, without a doubt, have prevented many casualties during the operations of Company G.

3. ENEMY USE OF TERRAIN AND STRONGPOINTS

Quickly after the jump off on 1 August, the men of Com-

pany G found themselves pinned to the ground by devastating machine gun fire. What caused this situation? Wasn't the enemy supposed to be greatly understrength, and demoralized? The answer was the effective use of terrain. The hedgerows gave to the enemy innumerable "minature cross compartments" which obviously favored the defense, and the enemy weapons were sighted accordingly. The enemy was aware of the intended advances of the tank-infantry elements to TESSY SUR VIRE. Sensing these advances, the enemy attempted to hold the high ground south of the VILLE-BAUDON-TESSY SUR VIRE axis from which to deliver flanking fires. And as long as they held this critical terrain feature, they were successful in delaying the advance. The enemy was most effective in delaying the tank elements by strongly defending critical points. The action of the afternoon of 31 July demonstrated how a strongpoint consisting of a tank and limited infantrymen, appropriately placed, could present a formidable obstacle.

4. FRIENDLY COLUMN COVER

"Every time I look up and see one of those P-47's diving on a Kraut strongpoint, I want to stand up and cheer". (31) This is the way a soldier of Company G described his feeling of the continuous column cover afforded by the P-47s, and, upon analysis it is the way most infantrymen feel. The immediate availability of the Tactical Air Control Party in the leading tank elements, gives an instant striking force from the air. This may be best illustrated by the bombing and strafing of the

(31) Personal knowledge

strongpoint in the vicinity of BEAUCOUDRAY. The enemy found out that it was impossible to cope with attacks from the ground and air at the same time. Column cover is a morale factor for the friendly forces, and highly demoralizing for the enemy. The PWs in the interrogation report indicated the demoralizing factor of continuous Allied air cover.

5. TANKS AS CARRIERS OF INFANTRY

The role of supporting infantry in the tank-infantry team has been previously described as one of close mutual support. The problem of the infantry, in this situation, is obviously one of mobility. The absence of adequate personnel carriers that existed in the operation described dictated that the infantry ride the tanks. In the attack of 31 July, had the platoons of Company G not ridden the tanks, it is highly improbable that they could have been "on top" on the situation from the outset. There is, however, one factor that must be considered. The situation of 1 August developed so rapidly that the infantry advanced too far on the tanks before dismounting, and were immediately pinned down by machine gun fire. This is the factor that must be considered. It is apparent the tank is not vulnerable to small arms fire; and, as soon as the tank-infantry team is exposed to this type of fire, the infantry must dismount. The infantry, from the ground, can then support the tanks in a more efficient manner by directing their fire against the enemy installations. This coordination of the infantry dismounting must be effected between the tank commanders and the infantry commanders, and must be initiated upon the actions of the infantry commanders. It is the infantry,

exposed on the tanks, that first detects the presence of small arms fire. It goes without saying that the team will completely deploy if under large caliber fire.

6. SUPPLY AND EVACUATION

In an operation of this type, the problem of available transportation to effect an adequate status of supply and resupply, does not exist from an infantry standpoint. The transportation is no problem as stated, but routes available during daylight are not always available, and most resupply activities were effected during the hours of darkness. The use of tanks as carriers of the additional ammunition for the infantry, proved adequate. The combining of the infantry and the tank medical personnel proved to be satisfactory for medical evacuation requirements. This was, however, as previously mentioned, dependent on routes.

7. INFANTRY COMPANY UNIT

The mission of closely supporting tanks in the attack by the infantry precludes the maintaining of company unity that normally exists in infantry tactics. The company commander found that when his platoons were dispersed, it was impossible to establish a normal CP during the attack. The occupation of the company CP, located with the rear elements of the tank column, during the attack of 1 August proved useless. The entire command group should have been forward with the company commander to assist in the control. The executive officer consumed valuable time in coming forward and being oriented after the company commander was wounded. As a rebuttal to this state-

ment, it might be said that if the entire command group is forward, there is a possibility of having the entire group hit. It is felt, however, that in a very fluid situation where control at the best is difficult, all key personnel must be forward. Upon close analysis, there is actually very little assistance a standard CP without adequate communications can give to the company commander who is forward with the attacking tanks. It must be stressed, however, that the lack of the true sense of company unity does not mean the absence of any of the platoons when it is avoidable on the part of the company commander. The company commander found that on the afternoon of 31 July he was required to revert to a defensive position without the use of the weapons platoon. The tank transportation was available for this platoon, and they should have moved forward with the three rifle platoons. The company commander used poor judgment in thinking that the weapons platoon could be sent forward when needed.

8. THE EMPLOYMENT OF ARMY TRUCK COMPANIES

The assignment of Army Truck Companies to the mission of personnel carriers of infantry operating in the role of armored infantry is not tactically sound. The personnel of these organizations are not trained for front line combat duty. This is demonstrated by the example in which the two drivers abandoned their vehicles during the air raid in the vicinity of VILLEBAUDON. The company commander found it necessary to provide assistant drivers, and to supervise the assigned non-organic truck drivers very closely. When an infantry company is to be motorized for a tank supporting mission, where possible, the

transportation should be organic of the regiment or division. The additional assigned transportation of the Army Truck Companies should therefore be given the duties of the organic transportation in carrying out administrative activities. This action would assist a company commander by the presence of combat trained drivers of his own regiment or division.

LESSONS

1. A successful tank-infantry team is based upon aggressive teamwork comprised of prior training and mutual understanding of each others capabilities and limitations.
2. The infantry element of the tank-infantry team should be provided with additional medium range radios that net with the tank radios.
3. A greatly understrength enemy can delay superior forces by effective use of the defensive advantages afforded by existing terrain.
4. The continuous presence of friendly air column cover affords direct tactical and morale support to the friendly ground forces.
5. The use of tanks as personnel carriers of infantry in the tank-infantry team is indispensable, but must be correctly utilized.
6. Supply and evacuation activities are predicated on the availability of cleared routes.
7. The three rifle platoons and the weapons platoon, where possible, must be kept together, but not necessarily under company unity.
8. The use of Army Truck Companies as personnel carriers

for infantry in the role of armored infantry does not always provide the close combat support desired.

ORGANIZATION FOR COMBAT OF CCA,
2D ARMORED DIVISION,
19 JULY 1944

<u>UNIT</u>	<u>MAJOR COMMANDERS</u>
Hq., Combat Command A	Brig. General Maurice Rose
66th Armored Regiment*	Colonel John Collier
22d RCT (4th Infantry Division)**	Colonel Charles Lanham
14th Armored Field Artillery Battalion (SP)	
Companies A and C, 17th Armored Engineer Battalion	
702d Tank Destroyer Battalion (SP)	
Company A, 48th Armored Medical Battalion	
Battery D, 195th AAA Battalion (SP)	
24th Cavalry Squadron***	

* Organized under a special T/O & E, for a Heavy Armored Division dated 1942.

** Consisting of the following units:

22d Infantry Regiment

44th Field Artillery Battalion (SP)

Company C, 4th Medical Battalion

427th Q.M. Truck Company

428th Q.M. Truck Company

*** Attached after the operation began.

CHART "A"