

General Subjects Section
ACADEMIC DEPARTMENT
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL
Fort Benning, Georgia

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
1947 - 1948

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "G" 187TH
GLIDER INFANTRY REGIMENT (11TH AIR-
BORNE DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON
NICHOLS FIELD, LUZON, PHILIPPINE
ISLANDS, 13-15 FEBRUARY, 1945
(Personal Experience of a Company Commander)

Type of operation described: COMPANY IN THE ATTACK

Captain Harrison John Merritt, Infantry, (PRCHT)
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO 1

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Index.....	1
Bibliography.....	2
Introduction.....	3
The General Situation.....	4
Division Situation.....	4
Battalion Situation.....	8
Attack Across Nichols Field.....	9
Analysis and Criticism.....	16
Lessons.....	17

Maps

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 The War With Japan, Part 3
Department of Military Art and Engineering
U S Military Academy, West Point, N. Y. (TIS Library)
- A-2 Sixth United States Army Report of the Luzon Campaign
9 January 1945 to 30 June 1945 Volume 1 (TIS Library)
- A-3 Chronological Narrative, 187th Glider Infantry,
26 January 1945 to 18 February 1945 (Personal
Possession of Author)
- A-4 Eighth Army Report on the Nasugbu and Bataan Operations
(TIS Library)
- A-5 General Order Number 12, Headquarters Eighth
Army, dated 11 February 1945, titled Unit Citation
(Personal possession of author)
- A-6 Report of Airborne Operations, Luzon Campaign
Lt Col L. A. Walsh, Jr. (TIS Library)
- A-7 Maptalk SWPA, 30 May 1945 by USAFFE I&E Section
(Personal possession of author)
- A-8 Notes on the Luzon Campaign
Basis for morning reports after combat
(Personal possession of author)
- A-9 Letter from Lt. Col. Tipton, Bn Commander during operation,
dated 24 February 1948 (Personal possession of author)
- A-10 After Action Report XIV Corps M1 Operation
(Borrowed from Major L. W. Bailey)

THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY "G" 187TH GLIDER INFANTRY
REGIMENT (11TH AIRBORNE DIVISION) IN THE ATTACK ON
NICHOLS FIELD, LUZON, PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, 13-15
FEBRUARY 1945
(LUZON CAMPAIGN)
(PERSONAL EXPERIENCE OF A COMPANY COMMANDER)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of Company G, 187th Glider Infantry, 11th Airborne Division in the attack on Nichols Field, Luzon, Philippine Islands, 13-15 February 1945, in an operation where airborne troops were employed in a manner similar to any standard Infantry Division. (1)

It had been a long, hot, bloody trek back to the Philippines. It had been a war, the like of which had never been fought before. No clearly defined front lines; no short supply road back to the rear; sometimes no supplies.

To the staff each new mission meant weeks of careful planning and the closest coordination between the Army, the Navy, and the Air Force. Each arm of the service depended upon the other greatly. Why? Because each new mission did not mean the capture of a prominent terrain feature like a hill or a town, but an island, perhaps hundreds of miles from the nearest base or supply point. It is true that there must always be coordination between the different forces, but this type of warfare required the active participation of all forces in every mission. (2)

By September 1944, the American forces had hopped from island to island and had reached Morotai, northernmost point of the Halmahera group. The stage was set for the recapture of the Philippines. On 20 October 1944, the Sixth Army landed on Leyte Island, eighth largest of the group. By Christmas the island had been secured and the Japanese defenses of the

(1,2) Personal Knowledge

entire archipelago were split.

Plans now called for the conquest of Luzon, the most important island of all. (3)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

On 9 January 1945, the Sixth Army made an amphibious assault landing at Lingayen Gulf on the island of Luzon. Opposition was meager and the American forces, composed of the XIV and I Corps, pushed rapidly inland. (4)

It soon became evident that the Japanese plan did not call for a strong defense of the Central Plain Area. Consequently, the XIV Corps pushed rapidly southward and by 31 January, the 37th Division and the 1st Cavalry were hacking at the north doors of Manila. (See Map A)

Plans had been made to land the Eighth Army in the southern portion of Luzon and so it was ordered to:

1. Secure two beachheads in the coastal sector of Nasugbu Pacbi-loan (Tayabas) at times and places later designated, in order to contain hostile forces in Cavite, Batangas, and Tayabas Provinces;
2. Conduct subsequent overland and minor overwater operations as required to restrict enemy movement in the Batangas-Tayabas area;
3. Occupy and defend sites for light radar and air warning installations as required.

Eighth Army Field Order was published on 22 January 1945. This order directed the 11th Airborne Division to make a reconnaissance in force in the Nasugbu area on 31 January 1945. (5)

DIVISION SITUATION

The 11th Airborne Division was enjoying a well-earned rest on the beaches of Leyte, when it was alerted for the forthcoming mission. Time

(3) A-7, p.4 (4) A-10, p.92 (5) A-4, p.9

was short, therefore plans for the mission were started immediately. After numerous changes, a plan was finally decided upon. This called for the two glider regiments to land amphibiously at Nasugbu on 31 January, 1945, and for the parachute regiment to drop onto Tagaytay Ridge three days later. As the enemy strength was unknown at this time, the Navy was called upon to stand off-shore prepared to evacuate the Division in case opposition proved too strong. As was so often the case throughout the war in this theater, a corps consisted of but a reinforced division, and there were no units available to come to the division's aid if they "bit off more than they could chew". (6)

At this time it seems appropriate to acquaint the reader with some of the handicaps placed on the division because of an inadequate TO & E. The total strength of an airborne division at this time was approximately 3500 officers and men. The division consisted of one parachute regiment, two glider regiments, division artillery, and very light service units.

The greatest drawback in the composition of the glider regiment was the fact that it had but two battalions instead of the usual three. This dual organization proved very unsatisfactory as it was next to impossible to hold out an adequate reserve. The division commander solved this problem somewhat by the policy of attaching one battalion of the 187th Glider Infantry to either of the other two regiments and holding the other battalion in division reserve.

Each battalion consisted of a headquarters company and three rifle companies. In place of a heavy weapons company, headquarters company had a platoon of heavy 30 caliber machine guns and a platoon of 81mm mortars.

The rifle company consisted of two rifle platoons and a weapons platoon. Each rifle platoon was composed of three 12-men squads and a 60mm mortar squad. The weapons platoon consisted of two sections; a light

(6) A-3, p.1

machine gun section, and a 60mm mortar section. With this organization, one can readily see that it was next to impossible to have both a strong striking force and an adequate reserve.

The division was well equipped with automatic weapons but was sadly lacking in a knockout punch. The 75mm howitzers of division artillery did a wonderful job throughout the entire operation but were far too small to adequately support an attack against a heavily fortified position. The only support regiment could offer was the 37mm anti-tank gun, an excellent weapon but not altogether suited for the destruction of heavily fortified emplacements. (7)

From the above description one can understand that the division's best chance for success in combat depended upon its speed and aggressiveness. General Swing, the division commander, realized that the best way to overcome the shortcomings of the division was by audacious tactics. The entire Luzon campaign well bears out the soundness of this policy.

On 27 January 1945, the 11th Airborne Division embarked from San Pedro Bay, Leyte, by LCI, LCM and LST. Rather than risk the narrow passage between Leyte and Samar the convoy headed south around Mindanao, then swung north through the Sulu Sea to Mindoro where the 511th Parachute Infantry disembarked. (8) (Map A)

Pls. not change
Landing operations were commenced on the morning of 31 January 1945, under cover of fire from destroyers and Army Air Force planes that battered enemy installations ashore. Meeting slight opposition, the division advanced rapidly to the vicinity of Mt. Aiming. Here the division first began to encounter a stubborn strong point, delaying defense. Allowing some of our leading elements to pass by, enemy artillery from well-concealed positions on the slopes of Mt. Aiming suddenly laid fire on the advancing troops. Our artillery took up counter-battery fire but it required nume-

(7) A-10 p.92 Personal Knowledge (8) A-3 p.1

rous air strikes to silence the enemy guns. (9)

On 3 February, the 511th Parachute Regiment jumped onto Tagaytay Ridge and quickly made contact with the division. By seizure of Tagaytay Ridge, the southgate to Manila was opened. A two-lane cement highway provided a down-hill route straight into the city. (10)

Sunday morning, 4 February 1945, the division, with the 511th Parachute Regiment leading, commenced its half-skirmishing, half-triumphal march on Manila. Filipinos lined the road cheering and holding their fingers up forming the traditional "V" for victory symbol. (11)

The advance of the division was very rapid and definitely broke some well established principles. Flank protection was provided by small patrols that were far from adequate. The division was simply driving forward on a limited front with a long, unprotected supply line back to Nasugbu. The situation was well summed up with the statement: "We now hold a beachhead 200 yards wide and 55 miles deep." (12)

The unexpected landing and the rapid advance of the division confused the enemy and upset most of their well-planned defenses. Mines that were prepared along our route of advance were not detonated. Not a bridge was destroyed until Imus was reached. (13)

By 1800 on the 4th of February, Paranaque, adjacent to Nichols Field, was reached. Here strong, well-prepared defenses along the Paranaque River were encountered.

The bridge was prepared for destruction and was protected by many well-placed, strongly manned, mutually supporting pill-boxes. In addition, the bridge site was the aiming point for Japanese 8-inch naval guns located in the Nichols Field area. (14)

The Japanese were now compressed into a pocket, hemmed in by the Sixth Army on the north and by the sea to the west. The only escape was

(9) A-3, p.3 (10) A-4, p.17 (11) A-3, p.11 (12) A-6, p.4 (13) A-6, p.4 (14) A-6, p.5

east to the mountains.

After numerous attempts had been made, the river was crossed. Pushing steadily forward against a fear crazed, fanatical enemy, contact was made by patrol with the 1st Cavalry Division in the vicinity of the Polo Club on 11 February 1945. (15)

BATTALION SITUATION

By the 12th of February most of Nichols Field had been captured against strong opposition. The field was not yet operational and would not be until the east side had been secured and the Japanese anti-aircraft guns in the vicinity of Fort McKinley had been destroyed.

In preparation for an all out attack against Fort McKinley, the division planned to push their lines to the east as far as the Manila railroad (Aguna Extension) on the 12th of February. Consequently, the 2nd Battalion, 187th Glider Infantry was relieved from attachment with the 511th Parachute Infantry and attached to the 188th Glider Infantry, and moved from its position on the Polo Field to the north edge of Nichols Field, where it filled a gap between the 511th Parachute Infantry and the 188th Glider Infantry. (16) (Map B)

The morning of 13 February found the battalion in line with the 511th Parachute Infantry on its left. The order from the 188th Glider Infantry stated: 2nd Bn. 187th Gli.Inf. (Tipton) atchd (1 Plat 21st Inf. Cannon Co. 1 Sect Co C AB Engrs) will seize by 131000 Manila Railroad (Aguna Extension) within its zone of action, assembling in the Bn assembly area and be prepared for coordinated attack to the East. (17)

Approximately 1600 yards to the front of the battalion was a long, low ridge that commanded the flat ground between us and the railroad. While not high, this ridge was a prominent terrain feature and had to be secured. The only vegetation was dry grass and a lone tree that was un-

(15) A-6, p.6 (16) A-10, p.94 (17) A-3, Warning Order #3

doubtedly an aiming point for Japanese fire.

The ground between our position and the ridge was as flat as a billiard table. At one time it had been a rice paddy but now was dry and hard. The only cover was the small ridges that interlaced the area to form small rice ponds that were now dry. It was across this open, flat terrain, covered by grazing 20mm and 40mm fire, that the 2nd Battalion was to attack. (18)

The battalion plan of attack called for E company on the right and G company on the left. F company, because of its favorable position on the high ground, was to support by fire. The platoon from the 21st Infantry Cannon Company was to occupy firing positions in the vicinity of F company prepared to fire on targets of opportunity. (19)

ATTACK ACROSS NICHOLS FIELD

The attack jumped off as planned and the two companies moved rapidly, realizing that success depended upon taking the ridge as quickly as possible. The ridge was quickly reached and the two companies swarmed over the hill and into the Jap emplacements. For some unknown reason the hill was very lightly held and the Japs withdrew east toward Fort McKinley. (20)

Up until now casualties were very light in both companies. But now the unexpected happened. Word of an impending air strike reached battalion, but, before the attacking companies could be notified, or the strike called off, the bomb run had been started. Strafing as they dove downward onto the position now held by E and G companies, bombs were released with the ridge as the target. Most of the bombs went over G company but E company was not as fortunate. One bomb landed in the center of its 1st platoon, and when the dust had settled most of the platoon had been killed or wounded. (21)

(18) Personal Knowledge (19) Personal Knowledge (20) Personal Knowledge

(21) A-9, p.2

As can always be expected when an objective has been taken, artillery and small arms fire began sweeping the ridge. Men were stunned as a result of the bombing, and if the enemy had launched a strong counterattack at this moment, he would have stood a good chance of retaking the ridge. The only logical explanation of his failure to capitalize on the situation was because most of his leaders in this area were navy and service force units who were poorly trained in ground tactics.

The company commanders of E and G companies quickly decided upon a plan for the defense of the hill. The plan called for the splitting of G company, but under the existing conditions this move was justified. The 188th Glider Infantry, in its drive from the South, had now reached the high ground about 500 yards south of our position, and was digging in. It was decided that E Company would dig in right where they were and that G Company would form a perimeter defense by placing a platoon on each flank of E Company, and the weapons platoon across the rear. (22)

Within two hours the position had been organized and a wire line from battalion had been installed. Orders were received that the 188th Glider Regiment and the 2nd Battalion were to hold their present positions until the 511th Parachute Regiment came into line. The remainder of the day was spent in evacuating the dead and wounded. E Company was about 50% effective at this time while G Company was fairly strong with 4 officers and 107 enlisted men. (23)

With the coming of darkness, the men climbed into their two-men fox-holes. One man would always be awake during the night. Each hole was connected to the next hole by a rope with the end of the rope fastened to the wrist of one of the occupants of the hole. Connecting the holes in such a manner served two purposes.

(22) Personal Knowledge (23) A-9, p.2

At certain times during the night, the platoon sergeant would give three jerks on the rope that connected his hole to the next hole. This was the signal for the guards to change over. The signal would be passed on until it reached the last hole. The man in the last hole would start a return signal to signify that everything was all right. If at any time the OK signal failed to come back up the line, every hole would be alert for infiltrating Japs.

The second purpose that this arrangement served was to act as a warning net for the platoon. If anyone saw the enemy attempting to infiltrate, he would sound the alarm by jerking the connecting rope a number of times. This system did have its drawbacks, but the company was proud of the fact that the enemy had often attempted to, but had never succeeded in infiltrating through the company perimeter.

The night was uneventful for E Company and G Company, but the battalion CP was not so fortunate. The following excerpt was taken from a letter received by the writer from Lt. Col. Tipton, who was the battalion commander.

"My memory isn't too clear on the bayonet assault by the Nip. I awoke and saw the Nip in a hostile attitude with a bayonet. I forgot any commando training and grabbed the bayonet and cut the hell out of my hand on his sharp bayonet. While we were contesting possession of his rifle, Barker got his carbine and shot the Jap. Barker: "Of all the nerve! You little yellow _____, coming in here with a bayonet."

Before daylight four more Japs were killed in the perimeter. How did they get in? One man with a tommy gun on the perimeter had killed 16 Nips and then ran out of ammunition. Then he laid "doggo" as the 4 remaining Nips ran by him. He then yelled out that 4 Nips were in the perimeter.

The next day, 11 February, was uneventful for the 2nd Battalion as orders were received to hold in present position. Mortars and self pro-

pelled 76mm guns silenced many of the enemies 20mm and 40mm guns. An occasional 5 inch shell landed on the position throughout the day, but caused only two casualties. The machine guns continued a steady stream of fire on positions in front of the 511th and by late afternoon the 511th had cracked the Jap defenses and made patrol contact with our left flank. (24)

On the morning of the 15th, orders were given to prepare to continue the attack. The plan called for the 188th to pivot and strike toward Fort McKinley. The 2nd Battalion and the 511th would continue in the same direction as previously, with all forces converging at Caribou gate of Fort McKinley. (25)

The battalion plan was simple as there was no choice except to push straight to the front and keep going. Lt. Col. Tipton, the battalion commander, stressed one point. "Once the LD has been crossed, keep going until I order you to stop. Don't give the little _____ chance to get set. I ran a good many problems over this same ground when stationed here as a Lt. It is a damn good defensive terrain and so I repeat; hit hard and keep moving. Don't stop for anything. What you by-pass E Company will take care of." (26)

The LD was to be the south line of the Manila railroad that ran north and south at the base of the ridge we now occupied. The bed of this railroad rose about 6 feet above the level of the ground. Just beyond the railroad and running parallel was a dry stream bed. The terrain to the east rose gradually to form a grass covered east west ridge with its highest point approximately 1000 yards east of our present position. This ridge appeared peaceful and free from emplacements until it was carefully scrutinized through Japanese 20 power naval glasses that were found in one of the caves. It was then determined that the whole ridge was another of the Japs' well concealed rats' nest. (27) (Map C)

(24) Personal Knowledge (25) A-3, Field Order #9 (26, 27) Personal Knowledge

Fifteen minutes prior to the time set for the attack, G Company moved to the railroad tracks slightly to the left of the front of E Company, who remained on the high ground. This permitted E Company and the heavy machine guns to fire across our front initially. F Company moved up from battalion reserve and took up positions to the left of G Company. All was ready for what was hoped to be the last attack across Nichols Field. (28)

The company plan called for the first platoon to lead out with three squads in line forming a platoon V. Because it was impossible for the light machine guns to provide fire support from the railroad tracks, they were to follow the first platoon. It was believed that they might be needed in a hurry when the crest of the ridge was reached. Putting the machine guns so near the front may seem strange to the reader, but this practice had proved very satisfactory in past operations. The second platoon was to remain in position at the railroad tracks until ordered forward by the company commander. The four 60mm mortars were set up and prepared to fire on any target of opportunity. (29)

Communication was by means of the SCR-536 radio which was carried by every officer, platoon and section leader. The company commander in all attacks moved with the first platoon. The company 300 radio stayed with the executive officer at the company CP. All messages from battalion were relayed from the company CP to the company commander over the SCR-536. (30)

There are many who criticize the policy of the company commander, habitually moving with the lead unit. It is true that his movements may be restricted when the lead platoon is brought under heavy fire, but he is in a position where he can best determine the situation and make hasty, sound decisions as to the best course of action to be taken. The writer believes that when company communication is reliable, the company commander and the platoon leaders should always move near the lead unit.

(28,29,30) Personal Knowledge

At 1215, following an intense artillery and mortar barrage coupled with an air strike, the attack jumped off. The first platoon scrambled over the railroad tracks and started forward. Not a target appeared or a casualty suffered as the platoon crossed the dry stream bed and started up the barren slopes. (31) (See Map C)

Quickly but cautiously, the platoon moved forward. One hundred yards, two hundred yards, and still not a shot came from the known enemy position on the high ground to the front. Something was wrong, but what? Could it be possible that the position was unoccupied? Suddenly the unexpected happened again.

Machine guns located in the stream bed that the platoon had just crossed opened up on the right rear of the first platoon. The stream bed made a sharp turn to the east, slightly below our crossing point and ran parallel to our line of advance. From this position the Japs were placing short range machine gun fire into the first platoon. (32)

Every man in G Company was a veteran of the Leyte campaign and was battle wise. As a result, the platoon was well dispersed. With the first burst, every man hit the ground and found some cover where to the inexperienced, there would have been none. (33)

Before any fire could be brought to bear on the general location of the machine guns, a shouting, screaming mass of Japs climbed out of the creek bed and charged toward the platoon. This was the answer to why the Japs had not fired on us before. They were pulling one of their old tricks of allowing part of a unit to pass by and then attack. Without doubt, they had guessed our intentions, and had planned to counter-attack, or had been in the process of launching an attack of their own when our attack was launched.

(31,32) A-9, p.3 (32) Personal Knowledge

The outcome of this battle might well have been different if the Americans had not been well trained with plenty of experience. Every man came to his feet and began emptying his rifle into the mass of charging Japs.

The machine gunners who had been following closely behind, had their weapons mounted and firing within seconds. Their fire combined with the fire of the BAR's and individual weapons began knocking the Japs over like "ten pins". Still they came on in seemingly endless streams. Soon the leading enemy closed into the first platoon and all semblance of organization vanished. It was every man for himself.

The machine guns, because of their positions were still in the clear and were pouring a steady stream of fire into the Japs as they came out of the stream bed. This fire was very effective as the Japs were very close together as they crawled over the bank.

When the first enemy fire was brought on the company, the company commander had reached a quick decision. Due to the closeness of the two forces, it was impossible to place mortar fire on the leading Japs. The only course of action was to commit his other platoon. The order was given to the platoon leader of the 2nd platoon to move into the draw from his present position and clear the draw of all enemy. The order was unnecessary, as the platoon leader, acting upon his initiative, had already started his platoon over the railroad and into the draw.

Detailed plans and orders were impossible at this time. Coordination of fire with the machine guns could not be made because of the necessity of speed. As is true with most all small unit action, success is the direct result of clear thinking and quick coordinated action on the part of all leaders. Seldom is there time for detailed orders and instructions. Each leader must be alert to observe the actions of other units and be quick to

make his actions coincide.

At about the time the two forces became intermingled, the 2nd platoon had advanced down the creek bed and knocked out several machine guns while suffering but two casualties. This had been fairly simple as the creek bed was empty except for the enemy machine gunners who had ceased firing, because their fire was masked by their own troops, and were engrossed in watching the battle. The platoon leader ordered one squad to continue up the creek for another hundred yards and hold up. Leading the other two squads, he left the creek bed and headed into the melee.

Everything was really confused at this time. The Japs, for some unknown reason, did not attempt to fight it out, but tried to pass through the platoon and reach the shelter of their holes. Screaming like a flock of frightened chickens, they were running right through the first platoon and up the ridge toward their bunkers and pill boxes.

Realizing that the enemy in the bunkers would soon perceive the situation and commence firing, even if it meant killing some of their own men, the company commander attempted to move the platoon up the hill. At about this time the platoon leader of the 2nd platoon joined the company commander and with his two squads, started up the hill. The platoon leader of the first platoon was quick to understand what was taking place and with the help of his platoon sergeant began pushing his platoon forward.

Help now arrived on the scene. F Company on the left flank of G Company had swung to their right and reached the crest of the hill. This put the remaining Japs between the two companies and cut off the route to their positions.

Within a very few minutes all action ceased and the two companies joined on top of the hill. Company F moved to the left back into their own zone. G Company began dropping hand grenades into firing apertures of

this position which was later found to be three stories deep. Without warning, there was a muffled explosion and the earth on top of the hill rose and then settled. Most of the company was knocked to the ground but not a single man was seriously injured.

The Jap had made his last bid. Preferring death to the disgrace of capture, he had blown his position while the enemy was on top of it. Without doubt, he expected the whole hill to be destroyed killing everyone on it. Fortunately, the charge was too small or all of it did not explode, and his last attempt turned out to be a failure also.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

The writer has attempted to portray the action from a company standpoint and tried to avoid mentioning any facts except those known by the company commander at the time the action took place. In analyzing this operation, only the tactical decisions of the battalion and company will be covered.

The TO & E of an airborne division at the time this action took place was far from adequate. It was impossible to employ tactics as taught in the American Army due to the fact that the organization was built of the duel system.

The company strength at the time of the landing at Nasugbu was four officers and one hundred and thirty-three enlisted men. The only replacements that the company had received after the Leyte operation were from other sections of the battalion. The company landed under strength and had not received any replacements up to the time that this action took place.

An airborne force is a highly trained unit well equipped in automatic weapons, but is not capable of, or should not be given the mission of attacking a well planned heavily fortified position without artillery and armor support. The division was successful because it achieved surprise on

landing and did not give the enemy the opportunity to fully occupy his prepared positions. Success on Nichols Field against the Genko Line would have come much harder if the defender had been the true well trained Japanese soldier instead of the composite force of Army, Navy, and Service Troops.

About the attack on the 15th of February, Lt. Col. Tipton, the battalion commander made the following statement: (Letter dated 24 February 1943) "Since it all sounds wonderful let me confess that I (in particular) and the rest of my staff and commanders made the biggest mistake in the war, as I saw it, during the action you have selected. The Nips had prepared a counter-attack in that damn little stream line beyond the RR, and we didn't guess or prepare (by fire) that his eggs were in that basket. It was so close we felt we controlled it, yet we killed over 200 Nips in that little wrinkle in the terrain. I'm not proud of that because we lost some good men because of our not seeing all the situation."

This statement came as a surprise to the writer. The writer had never considered the possibility of a mistake having been made by anyone in planning this operation. The surprise attack of the Japanese was considered to be just another of their unexpected acts.

In reviewing this operation it now appears that the company commander of G Company made one outstanding error. He completely ignored the creek bed as a possible position for the enemy to launch a counter attack. He should have secured his right flank by sending a squad up the creek bed as soon as the attack jumped off.

The enemy had been completely defeated and had withdrawn to a well planned heavily fortified position. The terrain over which the battalion was attacking did not provide any apparent position from which the enemy could launch a coordinated counter attack. The fact that he did launch

a counter attack when he did prove one thing. The enemy will often act in a manner that cannot possibly be foreseen.

In summing up the results of the attack of 15 February the enemy had better than 350 counted dead. G Company had four men killed, 10 enlisted men and 1 officer wounded, for a ratio of nearly 25 enemy killed to every American killed or wounded.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons emphasized by this operation are:

1. Do not over-estimate the enemy. Many times a quick decisive victory can be obtained by employing unorthodox tactics and audacious plans that will upset the enemy's scheme of maneuver.
2. An airborne division under the TO & E of 1942 is not capable of extended combat without attachments of heavy artillery and transportation.
3. The special training given an airborne soldier, ie., parachute training, physical conditioning, etc, separate the weak from the strong, the wishful from the determined, resulting in a unit composed of America's best.
4. Picking combat leaders requires a careful study of every man and a complete understanding of human behavior. Under trying conditions, the most unlikely will often turn out to be natural leaders. One that others will trust and follow for no apparent reason.
5. Air strikes in close support of ground units must be carefully coordinated. Each commander who calls for an air strike must be absolutely certain of the most forward position of all his forces.
6. Attack is always an enemy capability. Regardless of the circumstances, regardless of his strength, regardless of the terrain, every commander must realize that the enemy might attack.
7. The most important decision a leader must make in combat is when and where to commit his reserves.

8. Leaders must be capable of acting without orders. Combat will often prohibit the issuance of orders and the success of any operation depends upon the ability of the small unit leaders to act without orders.

9. Small unit training should not always be conducted over terrain that is ideally suited for the type of maneuver being conducted. This tends to make the individual believe that one type of terrain means defense and other types mean attack. The situation and not the terrain more often dictates the plan of maneuver.