

*Wharton  
3 Mar*

Staff Department  
THE INFANTRY SCHOOL  
Fort Benning, Georgia

*3 March  
0800  
Wharton*

ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE  
1949-1950

TITLE

THE BATTLEFIELD COMMANDER MUST AT ALL TIMES ASSURE  
HIMSELF THAT HIS SECURITY IS ADEQUATE AND ALERT.

HISTORICAL EXAMPLES

- (1) 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry (88th Infantry Division) at Monte Fabbro, Italy (21 September 1944)
- (2) 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry (6th Infantry Division) at Orion, Bataan, P. I. (15-16 February 1945)
- (3) Company A, 508th Parachute Infantry (82d Airborne Division) near Rencheaux, Belgium (22-24 December 1944)
- (4) 2d Battalion, 324th Infantry (44th Infantry Division) at Bushen Busch Woods, France (15 February 1945)

Captain Roule C. Moxingo, Infantry  
ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO II

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	<u>PAGE</u>
Bibliography . . . . .	2
Introduction . . . . .	3
Historical Example (1) . . . . .	4
Discussion (1) . . . . .	8
Historical Example (2) . . . . .	9
Discussion (2) . . . . .	12
Historical Example (3) . . . . .	12
Discussion (3) . . . . .	16
Historical Example (4) . . . . .	16
Discussion (4) . . . . .	19
Conclusion . . . . .	19

Map A - Action at Vallibona, 21 September 1944.

Map B - Defense of Orion, 15-16 February 1945.

Map C - Defense on Salm River, 21-23 December 1944.

Map D - Attack on Buchen Busch Woods, 15 February 1945.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

### EXAMPLE 1

350th Regimental History for the Month of  
September 1944.  
(TIS Library)

### EXAMPLE 2

The Operations of the 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry  
(6th Infantry Division) in the Night Defense of  
Orion, Bataan, P. I., 15-16 February 1945.  
(Luzon Campaign)  
by Major Cecil C. Helena  
(Military History Committee, TIS)

### EXAMPLE 3

The Operations of A Company, 508th Parachute  
Infantry (82d Airborne Division) Near Rencheaux,  
Belgium. (Ardennes Campaign) 22-25 December 1944  
by Major Jonathan E. Adams, Jr.  
(Military History Committee, TIS)

### EXAMPLE 4

Operations of the 2d Battalion, 324th Infantry  
Regiment (44th Division) in the Battle of  
Buchen Busch Woods, 15-17 February 1945  
(Rhineland Campaign)  
by Major Joseph M. Flesh  
(Military History Committee, TIS)

THE BATTLEFIELD COMMANDER MUST AT ALL TIMES ASSURE HIMSELF THAT HIS SECURITY IS ADEQUATE AND ALERT.

### INTRODUCTION

Security in the military sense is defined as "the measures taken by a command to protect itself from observation, annoyance or surprise, and to obtain freedom of movement for itself". In this discussion we will discuss the necessity for the small unit commander to take adequate measures to secure his command from tactical surprise.

To be considered adequate, the security elements of a command should be of the strength and disposition necessary to protect the command from the actions of small enemy groups or to be able to alert the command of any approach in force by the enemy in sufficient time for the command to take any action that is demanded by the situation. For example, the security elements of a unit occupying a defensive position should be of such strength and disposition as to be able to protect the unit from actions of enemy patrols and, in case of an attack in force by the enemy, should be able to alert the unit and delay the enemy so that the full striking force of the unit can be utilized in carrying out the defensive mission. There is no set rule by which a commander can determine what security will be necessary under any given circumstances; and he can determine his needs only by a continuing estimate of the situation.

Once a commander has determined that his security is adequate, he must also assure himself that his security is

---

kept alert. This can be accomplished by supervision. The much repeated statement that good planning is to no avail unless the execution of the plan is efficiently supervised is as applicable to the maintenance of security as it is to any other military undertaking. Alertness of security elements can only be maintained by positive supervision by the commander, his staff and subordinate leaders.

If the battlefield commander does not assure himself that his security is adequate and alert, he is giving the enemy an opportunity to use the potent weapon of surprise, and this no commander can afford. The degree of surprise which an enemy is able to obtain in an action against a command is in inverse proportion to the adequacy and alertness of the security of that command.

**HISTORICAL EXAMPLE 1:** 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry (88th Infantry Division) at Monte Fabbro, Italy (21 September 1944)

At about one and a half hours before darkness on 21 September 1944, the Commanding Officer, 350th Infantry, part of the 88th Infantry Division of the Fifth Army ordered the 1st Battalion of his regiment to go into a tactical bivouac on the reverse slope of MONTE FABBRIO about twenty-seven miles northeast of FLORENCE, ITALY in the APENNINES MOUNTAINS. The 350th Infantry had been attacking over rugged mountainous terrain throughout the day and had encountered relatively light enemy resistance. The 349th Infantry was on the left of the regiment, and beyond a gap of about 5000 yards on the right flank was the left flank of the British Eighth Army. The regiment had been advancing with the 2d and 3d

---

Battalions in the lead and the 1st Battalion in reserve. Prior to ordering the 1st Battalion into a bivouac, the regimental commander had ordered the 3d Battalion into a hasty defensive position on MONTE BRUNO, 2000 yards to the north and the 2d Battalion into a hasty defensive position on MONTE DELLA CISTINA, 1500 yards to the northeast with the view of resuming the advance the following day.

At the time he issued the order, the regimental commander designated the house at VALLIBONA as the 1st Battalion command post and stated that the regimental command post would be located at CASA DI RABBIO. Upon receipt of the order, the Commanding Officer, 1st Battalion, Lt. Colonel Walter E. Bare, moved his battalion over the route indicated to the designated bivouac area. (See Map A) At this time the battalion formation was a column of companies with the order of march: command group, Company A, Company C, Company D, Headquarters Company minus, and Company B. Due to the heavy equipment carried by Company D and its resulting slow progress over the steep mountain trails, the last part of the battalion column was a considerable distance behind the two leading companies. When the battalion column reached the designated bivouac area, the battalion commander decided to dispose the battalion with Company A in the northeast portion of the battalion area, Company C in the northwest portion, Company D and Headquarters Company minus in the vicinity of the command post and Company B in an area astride the trail to the south of the command post.

Darkness closed in before Companies A and C reached their assigned areas, but these two companies were very short-

---

ly organized for the night with local security established. The command group established the command post on the first floor of the building designated by the regimental commander, and the second floor was assigned as sleeping quarters for the command post personnel. One room on the first floor and the outbuildings were to house the remainder of Headquarters Company minus and Company D. By 2200 hours, Company D, Headquarters Company, and Company B had not yet closed into the bivouac area.

At about this time a lone figure carrying a lantern approached the command post from the steps leading from the terraced area on which the command post building was located to a trail below. He called in Italian to the two security guards at the command post entrance. The guards told him to put the light out. The response was a burst from a German machine pistol which killed one of the guards and seriously wounded the other. Almost immediately a large group of Germans dashed from the steps from which the first man had come and surrounded the command post building in what they called a porcupine formation -- two or three men with automatic weapons at each corner of the house firing in all directions away from the house.

Simultaneously, a grenade was thrown into the command post catching the battalion commander and other personnel present completely by surprise. They all dashed up the steps to get their weapons which had been left on the second floor and thus permitted the Germans to enter the first floor. For the next hour and a half a fire fight took place between the Americans on the second floor and the Germans on the

---

first. After about forty five minutes the door to a small room at the south end of the second floor in which the battalion commander and the S-3 were isolated was blown from its hinges by grenades. The two men inside, both of whom were wounded, surrendered. About forty five minutes later, after not being able to contact the companies of the battalion on the radio, the remainder of the command post personnel surrendered.

The prisoners were assembled in the command post and were being searched and briefly interrogated when the 1st Platoon of Company D which had worked its way to a position up the hill from the command post opened fire with its machine guns, firing into the command post and the upper floor of the building. Six Germans were wounded, and at this time the German commander told the 1st Battalion Commander that if it became necessary for the Germans to fight their way out they would not take any prisoners, implying that they would kill the seven officers and fifteen enlisted men whom they held. He gave Lieutenant Colonel Bare two minutes to decide to order the battalion to cease fire. (Company A was also firing on the command post at this time with rifles and 60 mm mortars.) Thirty seconds later he asked for a decision, and Colonel Bare went to the door and yelled to the battalion to cease fire.

The battalion ceased firing, and the Germans marched the prisoners down the same steps which were used in the attack on the command post. Just below the steps and at points between there and the bottom of the draw the prisoners saw a column of Germans consisting of the decimated 2d Battalion,

---



132d Regiment of the German 44th Division with four mule drawn close support howitzers. The German column which had had the mission of going into a defensive position in that area moved back to the German lines without incident.

The 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry contacted the regimental commander and was ordered to secure itself and await the arrival of a new battalion commander the following morning.

(Above incident narrated by the author who was a platoon leader in Company C, 350th Infantry at the time of the incident. Information concerning occurrences in the command post obtained from Lt. Colonel James Ritts who was then Executive Officer of the 1st Battalion, 350th Infantry.)

#### DISCUSSION:

In this example we find a veteran battalion attacking as part of a regiment with an exposed flank, and such a situation makes the need for adequate and alert security doubly great and of utmost concern to the commander; however, at the time of the attack on the command post, there was no announced plan for coordinating security at battalion level. The responsibility for maintaining security for the command post in the absence of a battalion security plan devolved on the command post itself.

Two guards were not enough to carry out the mission of security, and their location prevented their giving an alarm in sufficient time to permit effective action to be taken to protect the command post. The security was not only inadequate but also unalert since the two guards who were posted allowed a German battalion column to approach within about one hundred feet of the command post without detection.

---

The undesirable results of inadequate and unalert security in this case cannot be measured fully by the loss of the seven officers and fifteen enlisted men who were taken prisoner because the effect of the intelligence information obtained by the Germans in this action on subsequent operations of the 88th Infantry Division cannot be gauged.

**HISTORICAL EXAMPLE 2:** 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry (6th Infantry Division) at Orion, Bataan, P. I. (15-16 February 1945)

On 15 February 1945, 37 days after the initial landings by the Sixth Army on the island of LUZON in the PHILIPPINE ISLANDS, the 2d Battalion, 1st Infantry (6th Infantry Division) minus Company F was ordered to occupy the town of ORION on the east coast of the BATAAN PENINSULA about half way from the base of the Peninsula to the tip. After closing on the town at about 1130 hours, the battalion received further orders by radio from regimental headquarters at BALANGA, 7000 yards to the north, that it would secure the town and send one reinforced platoon to LIMAY about 6000 yards to the south to secure the bridge across the LIMAY RIVER at that point. (See Map B)

The 3d Platoon of G Company was dispatched to LIMAY, and the battalion set about to carry out the regimental order to secure the town by establishing a defensive perimeter of outposts of three to five men spaced at intervals of 30 to 50 yards around the edge of the town which was about 1000 yards by 500 yards. E Company was assigned the portion of the town south of the river that runs through the town, and G Company was assigned the portion of the town north of the river, both

---

companies sharing responsibility for the river itself. The heavy machine guns of Company H were distributed throughout the perimeter. A road block, consisting of a 37 mm AT gun with canister shot and a half of a rifle squad, was established on the north-south highway at the southern edge of the town. A similar road block was established about 500 yards west of the town on an east-west trail that leads into the town. The battalion command post and its accompanying installations and the 81 mm mortar platoon were located in a church and a surrounding cemetery just west of the highway at the north edge of town.

During the afternoon and the early evening there was little indication of the presence of any enemy forces in the area, but at about one hour after darkness there was sporadic firing in the western portion of E Company's sector of the perimeter. Shortly thereafter the platoon leader of the platoon occupying the west portion of the G Company sector reported that he believed that Japanese troops were crossing the river by a ford about 200 yards west of the town. Sporadic firing continued in the E Company sector, and at about 2100 hours the road block on the highway saw a large group of people approaching the town on the highway. The group was talking loudly and showed no signs of stealth, and so the soldiers at the road block assumed that it was a group of townspeople returning to their homes. As the group approached to within a few yards of the road block, it was recognized as a large group of Japanese soldiers. Fearing annihilation, the road block did not open fire, and the Japanese entered the defensive perimeter without being fired upon. The enemy group

---

moved at a run on into the E Company position, passed the mortar location where they were fired upon and went on to the company command post which was at the south end of the only bridge across the river. When they entered the E Company command post, the command post personnel were unaware of their presence in the area. The Japanese killed and wounded several Americans as they passed through the building, and then they ran out of the building and across the bridge toward the battalion command post.

As the attack from the south was taking place, enemy machine guns opened up from the high ground north of town, routing the machine gun outposts outside the cemetery walls. Under cover of this fire a group of Japanese approached the town from the north. Again, in this case, an outpost on the highway thought the Japanese were Filipinos and did not open fire.

The two columns converged on the church, and the Japanese dashed into the battalion command post area and took the command post completely by surprise. Effective resistance was impossible, and the command post personnel dispersed in all directions to avoid being killed. The Japanese then proceeded to loot or destroy everything in the command post area.

With the fall of the battalion command post, the western portion of the G Company sector of the perimeter disintegrated. Communication and control throughout the battalion were now nonexistent, and coordinated action was impossible.

After a few hours of looting and destruction, the Japanese withdrew from the town by the routes on which they had entered except for a small group that went out of the town

---

by a route directly to the west. The 2d Battalion was unable to reorganize prior to the next morning.

(From a personal experience monograph by Major Cecil C. Helena who commanded Company G, 1st Infantry)

#### DISCUSSION:

In this action we find a battalion in an over extended perimeter defense without detached security outposts except for the poorly placed road block to the west of town. The outposts of the defensive perimeter itself were in most cases not mutually supporting, and when the shell of perimeter was penetrated the entire battalion position disintegrated.

With the adaption of such a disposition, alertness is imperative on the part of every outpost in the perimeter since each outpost carries out the mission of security as well as a mission of defense. This example shows the results of the failure to maintain alertness when security was the mission of every outpost of the perimeter.

**HISTORICAL EXAMPLE 3:** Company A, 508th Parachute Infantry  
(82d Airborne Division) near Rencheaux,  
Belgium (22-24 December 1944)

On 21 December 1944, Company A, 508th Parachute Infantry of the 82d Airborne Division, commanded by Captain Jonathan E. Adams, was assigned a defensive sector in a defensive line along the SALM RIVER in BELGIUM. The purpose of the defensive position was to cover the withdrawal of elements of the 7th Armored Division and the 106th Infantry Division which were retreating west before the German counteroffensive. Company

---

A, 508th Parachute Infantry occupied a position west of the SALM near the town of RENCHEAUX and was astride a highway which was a major route of withdrawal for the elements of the retreating divisions which were in the vicinity to the east. Company B, 508th Parachute Infantry was on the left flank of Company A, and the 3d Battalion, 112th Infantry, which had been cut off in the area and was attached to the 508th Parachute Infantry, was on the right of the company.

The company was disposed with the 1st Platoon on the south (right) side of the highway, the 3d Platoon on the north of the highway, and the 2d Platoon in support in a position about 50 yards to the rear astride the highway.

(See Map C) The SALM RIVER at this point is unfordable, and the only avenues of approach into the company position were the two railroad bridges and one highway bridge just to the front of the center of the company sector. There was no natural cover in the area except one small knoll in the 3d Platoon sector which commanded the eastern approaches to the three bridges. This knoll was occupied by two squads of the 3d Platoon.

Company A had three days in which to prepare its position, and considerable effort was put forth in perfecting the defensive emplacements. On 22 December a platoon from 325th Engineers prepared the three bridges in front of the company position for demolition, and the company commander of Company A established a group of security outposts on the eastern approaches to these bridges. The outposts consisted of a squad from the 2d Platoon, and the 2d Platoon Leader was responsible for supervising these outposts. During the day

---

the outposts occupied positions well to the front, and at night they would close in to positions nearer to the bridges to prevent being cut off in case of an attack by the enemy.

During the entire time that Company A was organizing its position, elements of the 7th Armored Division were hastily withdrawing along the highway through the company sector. Early on 23 December, the company commander was informed by the battalion commander that the 7th Armored Division was withdrawing its screening forces from the east. The battalion commander ordered that the northern railroad bridge be destroyed at 1500 hours and that the two other bridges be destroyed at 2200 hours or after all troops of the 7th Armored Division had withdrawn, whichever was earlier. The outposts were alerted, and the platoon leader of the 2d Platoon checked the demolition charges on the bridges.

The northern railroad bridge was destroyed as scheduled. At 1800 hours the company commander met the Commanding General of the 7th Armored Division at the bridge; and the general informed him that it was believed that all of that division had withdrawn. However, because of the possibility of isolated groups still being east of the river, the company commander was told to withhold destroying the remaining bridges until midnight. The company commander consulted the battalion commander, and the time for destroying the two remaining bridges was changed to 2400 hours.

At about 2200 hours, one of the outposts on the east of the river saw a column of men approaching from the east. He was uncertain whether this column was American or German until it approached to within about 10 yards. He then determined

---

that the column was German and fired at point blank range. The Germans scattered in confusion, and this permitted the outposts to withdraw across the bridge on signal from the 2d Platoon Leader.

Minutes passed and the bridges were not destroyed. It was then discovered that the demolition men had not been in position at the time of the skirmish and were now unable to reach the fuze lighters on the bridges. The situation called for immediate action because the Germans were already coming across the bridge. The company commander ordered the 2d Platoon Leader to get the bridges destroyed, and so, with the eight men who had constituted the outposts, the platoon leader rushed back across the bridge followed by the demolition men. This took the Germans by surprise, and the demolition men were able to pull the 30 second fuzes on signal. The outpost group withdrew across the bridge, and shortly thereafter, the railroad bridge was destroyed. However, the fuze lighter for the other bridge had failed to work.

The German strength was building up inasmuch as six machine guns could be heard firing on the east side of the river, and one enemy tank was firing into the company position.

Again, under the cover of the fires of the other two platoons of the company, the outpost group crossed the bridge and the demolition men set another fuze. The group withdrew, and the fuze exploded but did not detonate the demolitions. Finally by placing a box of Composition C-2 on the center of the bridge and firing a "bazooka" round at it, the bridge was destroyed.

The few Germans who had crossed the river were soon elimi-

---



nated, and the river obstacle apparently caused the enemy to temporarily abandon the attack.

Two days later the 82d Airborne Division was ordered to withdraw to a new defensive position ten miles to the rear, and Company A, 508th Parachute Infantry took part in this orderly withdrawal.

(From a personal experience monograph by Captain Jonathan E. Adams, Jr., who commanded Company A, 508th Parachute Infantry)

#### DISCUSSION:

In this case, the company commander made a correct estimate of his security needs. Alertness was maintained, and at the critical time the security outposts carried out their assigned mission in a commendable manner. Although the failure of the demolition men to be at their posts nearly caused the mission to fail, the aggressive action by the 2d Platoon Leader saved the situation. If the security in this situation had not been adequate and alert, it is not hard to imagine what the fate of the company would have been. As it was the company delayed the German advance and was subsequently able to withdraw to a new defensive line after fulfilling its mission along the SALM RIVER.

**HISTORICAL EXAMPLE 4:** 2d Battalion, 324th Infantry (44th Infantry Division) at Buchen Busch Woods, France (15 February 1945)

Early in February 1945, the 2d Battalion, 324th Infantry of the 44th Infantry Division received a warning order that stated that the division would make a limited objective attack in its zone in the near future to reduce the GRAS REDERCHING

---

reintrans in the Seventh Army front. The warning order also stated that the 2d Battalion would attack in its zone and that its objective would be the eastern portion of BUCHEN BUSCH WOODS which was located on commanding ground about 1100 yards to the north of the most advanced point of the battalion main line of resistance.

During the next few days, the battalion carried on a program of aggressive patrolling and obtained the following information about the German position to their front:

- (1) The BUCHEN BUSCH WOODS proper were strongly held and surrounded by a minefield;
- (2) The area to the east of the woods was lightly held -- covered by fire from the woods by day and outposted during the night by a series of lightly manned positions;
- (3) The night positions were changed from night to night but were withdrawn to the woods at about one hour before daylight each day.

Armed with this information the battalion proceeded with detailed plans for the attack.

At 1200 hours 14 February 1945, an order was received stating that the coordinated attack by the entire 44th Division would be made at 0645 hours 15 February. At the designated hour on the day of the attack the 2d Battalion launched its attack according to a carefully developed plan. A base of fire consisting of Cannon Company, Anti-tank Company, H Company minus, D Company and attached M-36 tank destroyers was located at MALINGERHOFF FARM and was the base of fire

---

for the regimental plan of maneuver. This base of fire was divided into two parts to support each of the assault battalions and was protected by one company from the 1st Battalion and one platoon of Company E. For the sake of surprise no artillery preparation was laid down.

E Company minus one platoon with one section of heavy machine guns attached led the 2d Battalion which was in a column of companies. (See Map D) It passed through the German lines east of BUCHEN BUSCH WOODS without being challenged by a German outpost and established two combat outposts of platoon strength -- one at a crossroads about 500 yards to the rear of the German position and another on the nose of small knoll about 400 yards east of the crossroads -- to prevent reinforcement of the German position in the woods.

Company F followed Company E and, enroute to an assault position in the rear of the German position, encountered only one German sentinel. He ran away without firing a shot or sounding an alarm.

G Company followed F Company and, in carrying out its mission of protecting the flank and rear of the battalion, established a defensive position to the east of BUCHEN BUSCH WOODS. It also encountered one German sentry who was killed before he could sound an alarm.

At 0645 hours F Company assaulted the German position from the rear, and by 0820 hours the 2d Battalion was reorganizing on its objective. The battalion had killed forty Germans, captured sixty and drove an undetermined number into the 3d Battalion zone where they were caught in the open by the attack of Company L.

---

(From a personal experience monograph by Major Joseph M. Flesh who was Executive Officer of 1st Battalion, 324th Infantry)

### DISCUSSION:

In this example we find an American battalion which carried out a well planned and well coordinated attack against a German strong point. The efficient planning and flawless execution of the attack must not be minimized; however, a major factor in the defeat of the German unit occupying the strong point was the inadequacy and unalertness of its security. They allowed the American Battalion to send patrols close to their position and learn their disposition and habits, and at the critical time they did not have sufficient security to warn of the attack. The disastrous result of inadequate security in this case needs little comment. It was a conclusive defeat for the German unit.

### CONCLUSION

The historical examples which have been examined point out in a conclusive manner the importance of security to the battlefield commander. By correctly estimating the security demands of the situation facing him and constituting his security on the basis of these demands and by providing the necessary supervision to keep battle weary outposts alert, the battle field commander can secure his command from surprise; however, if he fails to do this he is inviting defeat. The battlefield commander must at all times assure himself that his security is adequate and alert.

---