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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY A, 16TH INFANTRY
(1ST INFANTRY DIVISION) NEAR NICOSIA, IN
NORTHEAST SICILY, 28-29 JULY 1943
(SICILY CAMPAIGN)
(Personal Experience of a Rifle Company Commander)

Type of operation described: RIFLE COMPANY IN THE
APPROACH MARCH AND SUPPORT OF AN ADJACENT UNIT
IN THE ATTACK

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THE OPERATIONS OF COMPANY A, 16TH INFANTRY,
(1ST INFANTRY DIVISION) NEAR NICOSIA, IN NORTHWEST
SICILY, 28-29 July 1943
(Personal Experience of a Rifle Company Commander)

INTRODUCTION

This monograph describes the operations of Company A, 16th Infantry, 1st US Infantry Division, 28-29 July 1942, near Nicosia, Sicily, in the Sicilian Campaign.

On the morning of 10 July 1943 the US Seventh Army and the British Eighth Army, against comparatively light and sporadic resistance in most areas landed at widely separated points on the southern and eastern coasts of the Italian island of Sicily. The US Seventh Army invaded the southern coast; the British Eighth Army, the eastern coast. (See Map A) (1)

The principal units of the Seventh Army's initial landing force were the 1st, 3rd and 45th Infantry Divisions and elements of the 82nd Airborne and 2nd Armored Divisions. For the invasion these units were organized into the II Corps, and two task forces. The II Corps was composed of the 1st and 45th Infantry Divisions and a portion of the 82nd Airborne Division. (2)

By the end of D plus 2 the Seventh Army had a foothold 8 to 12 miles deep on the island. The beachhead was secure. (See Map B) (3) By 14 July it became apparent to the higher commanders that the enemy, whose attempts to drive the Allies into the sea had failed, realized that sufficient strength was not available to him to repulse the invaders and decided to fight a delaying action. (4)

The enemy's withdrawal on the Seventh Army front was rapid between 15 and 22 July, at which date the port of Palermo was captured without resistance. By 23 July the entire western half of the island was in Seventh Army hands and the southeastern

(1) A-2, p. 10-11; (2) A-1, p. a-6; (3) A-1, p. b-6; (4) A-1, p. b-8.

portion had been taken by the Eighth Army. (See Map B) (5)

Until this time the general plan for the conquest of Sicily had been for the Seventh Army to take the western portion of the island and the Eighth Army the eastern portion. (6) After the fall of the western portion of the island the direction and emphasis of the Seventh Army's attack was shifted toward the east and the port of Messina. (See Map B) (7)

With the exception of the II Corps the Seventh Army was engaged in reducing isolated pockets of resistance and in consolidating and organizing the conquered territory. The II Corps, now composed of the 1st and 45th Infantry Divisions, turned to the east, maintaining contact with the withdrawing enemy. (See Map C) (8)

The enemy continued to withdraw his forces rapidly in most areas on the Seventh Army front until 25 July. The British Eighth Army still was meeting heavy and stubborn resistance from German forces on the Catania plain southwest of Mount Etna. (9)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By 27 July enemy resistance on the II Corps front had stiffened and was increasing. A German motorized division faced the 45th Infantry Division on the left or north flank of the corps. The 1st Infantry Division on the right was opposed by a German panzer division. Remnants of the 26th and 28th Italian Divisions also were known to be in this area. (10)

The advance to the east was being delayed by stubborn enemy rear guard actions. The growing intensity of these delaying tactics led to the conclusion that preparations were being made by the enemy to organize an outpost line of resistance just west of the S. Stefano-Mistretta-Nicosia road, with the

(5) A-1, p. b-10; (6) A-1, p. D-9; (7) A-1, p. b-12, D-13;
(8) A-1, p. b-12; (9) A-1, p. D-13; (10) A-1, p. b-14, C-37.

main defensive position farther to the east. (See Map C) (11)

The terrain in this area was particularly well suited to the delaying tactics that the enemy was employing. A series of rocky ridges and mountains afforded the enemy numerous excellent defensive positions. The road net was extremely limited, canalizing communications along the two east-west highways in the corps zone. This inadequate road net also severely restricted the mobility and maneuverability of the fighting troops. (12)

The advance of the II Corps, as directed by higher headquarters, was to be made on two axes--the coastal road (Highway 113) and the road through Nicosia, Troina and Cesaro (Highway 120). During the period 23-27 July the II Corps had been advancing along these routes, gaining improved positions in preparation for a major attack to the east. (13)

On 28 July the 1st Infantry Division in its advance to the east cut the S. Stefano-Mistretta-Nicosia road in at least one place and was overlooking it at many points. On the left contact was made with the 45th Division near the town of Mistretta. The right flank of the division and the army was covered by a reconnaissance squadron which also was maintaining contact with the 1st Canadian Division on the Eighth Army's left flank. (14, 15)

In the forenoon of 28 July the 3rd Battalion, 16th Infantry, entered Nicosia. This battalion met with stiff resistance from Italian troops deployed in a craggy, rocky area in the north edge of the town. By mid-afternoon, the resistance was overcome, and more than 700 Italians and a few German stragglers were taken prisoner. (16)

The 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry, had moved out from an assembly area near Gangi the evening of 27 July with the

(11) A-1, p. C-37; (12) Personal Knowledge; (13) A-1, p. D-13, b-14; (14) A-1, p. b-14; (15) A.3, p. 20; (16) A-4, p. 8A.

mission of reducing, after a night attack, an enemy strongpoint on the main highway between Gangi and Nicosia. It arrived in Nicosia about 1600 hours 28 July. This battalion had met with little enemy infantry resistance, but had been harassed considerably by enemy artillery fire. (17)

At this time units of the division became occupied in reorganizing and moving into positions from which the attack to secure the high ground west of the Cerami River might be launched. The 16th Infantry had been ordered to consolidate its positions and to gain and maintain contact with units to its flanks. (18)

The regiment planned to seize, with the 1st Battalion, the high ground about three thousand yards east of Nicosia on the evening of 28 July. The 3rd Battalion was to remain in its present position in Nicosia for the night. The 2nd Battalion was to move up and occupy positions in the southern edge of Nicosia. The regiment was to be prepared to resume the advance the following morning. Shortly after 1600 hours the regiment issued orders in accordance with this plan. (19)

THE BATTALION SITUATION AND PLAN

The town of Nicosia, as were most inland Sicilian towns, was situated on a rocky cliff. Five or six hundred yards in any direction from the town there was a drop in elevation of more than six hundred feet and in many places the drop was even steeper. Highway 120 twisted through the town, generally west of the crest of the cliff. The cliff provided excellent cover and concealment from enemy fire and ground observation.

After receiving the regimental order about 1615 hours the 1st Battalion commander returned to the battalion area and assembled his company commanders for reconnaissance and

(17) Personal Knowledge; (18) A-3, p. 20; (19) Personal Knowledge.

issuance of the battalion order. The battalion at this time was disposed in column along Highway 120 in the southwestern outskirts of Nicosia and had fallen out on either side of the road. Occasional enemy artillery concentrations were passing harmlessly overhead and landing in the low ground west of the town. (20)

The reconnaissance party moved through the town to an observation post about three hundred yards northeast of Nicosia on Highway 120. Upon arrival at this point a report was received from the regimental intelligence and reconnaissance platoon which had just returned from a motor reconnaissance. The platoon leader reported that they had drawn heavy machine gun fire about two miles to the northeast on Highway 120. He also reported that a bridge on the Nicosia-Agira road about two thousand yards east of Nicosia had been blown. (21)

The reconnaissance consisted of observing, from the observation post, the objective about three thousand yards distant and of short stretches of the Nicosia-Agira road along which the battalion was to advance. At this time there was available one map of the area. The battalion commander gave each of his company commanders a glimpse of the map and prepared to issue the order. (See Map D) (22)

The battalion plan was to advance in column along the road to a point about two hundred yards beyond the blown bridge. At this point Companies A and C were to leave the road and advance to and occupy the high ground at Hill 731. Company B was to leave the column at the same point and proceed to and occupy Hill 796. The order of march was to be Companies A, C, B, D, and Headquarters. An east-west line drawn just north of the small hill near the church, in the area to be occupied by Companies A and C, was to be the boundary between those

(20) Personal Knowledge; (21) A-4, p. 8A; (22) Statement of Major David E. Millotta then Battalion S-2, 1st Battalion, 16th Infantry.

two companies. Company A was to deploy on the right or south. Company C was to be on the left, protecting the left flank of the battalion. Companies A and B were to patrol the area between their positions throughout the night. The battalion was to be prepared to continue the advance the following morning. The battalion CP was to be located in the vicinity of the blown bridge.

The battalion commander issued orders in accordance with this plan and directed that the movement be started immediately upon the return of the company commanders to their organizations. It was hoped that the objective would be reached before nightfall. Not more than five minutes had elapsed between the arrival at the observation point and the completion of issuance of the order. (23)

COMPANY A

At this point a brief account of A Company's participation in the war since departing from the United States on 2 August 1942 will acquaint the reader with the sort of unit about which this narrative is written.

The company, as a unit of the 1st Infantry Division, had made the initial landings in North Africa on 8 November 1942 near Arzew, Algeria, and had then fought in the Tunisian Campaign. Of the company of officers and men who sailed from New York in 1942 no officers and only a handful of enlisted men remained. However, with the exception of two officers and about twenty men, all members of the company were combat experienced prior to making the assault landing in Sicily.

Company A had arrived in Nicosia at 1600 hours, a very tired, dirty, thirsty, hungry organization. They had not slept during the previous thirty-six hours. Each man's ration (23) Personal Knowledge.

for the last twenty-four hours had consisted of one box of K ration. But their spirits were high, as spirits are apt to be when the enemy is on the run. (24)

THE APPROACH MARCH

Immediately upon return to his company, the captain of Company A formed his men and started the movement down Highway 120. There was not sufficient time to assemble the platoon leaders for orientation and issuance of the company order. These things would have to be done while the company was on the move.

Shortly after the company moved out, the company commander was given a box of K ration and his canteen was returned to him full of water. The first sergeant informed him that a canteen of water and a box of K ration had been issued to each man while the company commander had been on reconnaissance.

A few moments later a messenger delivered a roll of maps. The sheets that were received covered the area, but there were no duplicates for the platoon leaders. The company commander selected the sheet on which both the observation post, from which the battalion reconnaissance had been made, and the objective appeared. He filed the remainder in his map case. He noted that about two hundred yards of the road along which he was to advance did not appear on the sheet he had selected, but he did not take the time to find the next sheet and fit the two together.

As the company moved along the road toward the observation post the company commander oriented his platoon leaders as best he could and arranged to point out the route of march, and company and platoon objectives to each as their platoons passed the observation post. In due time this was done and the leading (2nd) platoon was assigned the area on the left
(24) Personal Knowledge.

or north side of the company objective, the next platoon (1st) was assigned the area on the right, and the remaining rifle (3rd) platoon was to furnish the patrols to Company B. One mortar squad was to double the column and join the leading platoon as soon as possible. The mission of the remainder of the Weapons Platoon would be assigned upon arrival at the objective. The company command group would follow the leading platoon. (25)

Expecting intense artillery fire as soon as the company emerged from behind the protecting cliff, the company commander was not very enthusiastic about pushing his company around the face of the mountain where they were visible from miles away. He would have chosen a less conspicuous route. His fears were unfounded. Nothing happened.

At the time the battalion order was issued the commander of Company A had been cautioned to exercise extreme care in proceeding down the mountainside as there were numerous roads not shown on the map that intersected the route of advance. Many of these roads were reported to be as well improved as the route of advance and it was felt that the column might easily wander from the prescribed route. (26)

The company commander, as he moved his company along the road, could see no cause for the alarm concerning the route as it was a well improved road and those intersecting it had proved to be little more than rocky trails. Then, suddenly, he, too, became alarmed.

Almost immediately below him he saw his leading platoon descending the mountainside on a road that angled sharply from side to side in a zigzag manner. This section of road did not correspond with any part of the prescribed route of advance as portrayed by the sheet of map being used by the company commander.

(25) Personal Knowledge; (26) Personal Knowledge.

There was, however, one such road pattern that did appear on the map. This road was very near to the point where the reconnaissance was made and several hundred yards from the point where the commander thought his company was at the moment. It was inconceivable to the company commander that he could have strayed so far from the prescribed route in moving so short a distance. The company commander scanned the mountainside but could locate no such road pattern except the one with which he was confronted. This, of course, led him to believe that he was on the one zigzag portion of road shown on his sheet of map.

He then halted his company while he tried to determine his position. Fifteen minutes later, after he had decided that the terrain along the route of advance appeared to be as portrayed by the map, excepting for the crooked stretch of road, it finally occurred to the company commander that he might, as a last resort, examine the next sheet of map on which, presumably, about two hundred yards of this road should appear.

As might be guessed, on a tiny portion of the next sheet of map this zigzag portion of road appeared. But nightfall was fast approaching and fifteen valuable minutes had been wasted. In addition to the time lost, the entire battalion column, which was following Company A, had been exposed to enemy observation and fire for fifteen additional minutes. Luckily, the enemy did not choose that particular time to fire upon the column. (27)

The advance continued without incident until about half of the leading platoon had forded the stream near the destroyed bridge. At this time the column was fired on from the high wooded ground on the left of the road, by what appeared to be two machine guns. The company took cover in the ditches along (27) Personal Knowledge.

either side of the road and in other small accidents in the terrain. From positions along the road the machine guns could not be located accurately enough to warrant placing either direct fire or area weapons on them.

The company commander moved up and contacted the platoon leader of the 2nd Platoon near the blown bridge. He found that two squads had been dispatched to overcome this resistance. It appeared that in about thirty minutes it would be dark enough to impair seriously the enemy's observation of the column. No casualties were being inflicted on the column by the machine gun fire. The company commander held up the advance, planning to continue when it became darker. It was quite obvious by this time that it was impossible to reach the objectives prior to darkness. Close observation of the times of daylight and darkness for the past three weeks qualified the company commander to make this decision pending approval by the battalion commander, as he knew within fifteen minutes when night would fall. This attention to the hours of sunrise and sunset had frequently paid dividends.

The battalion commander was notified of this action and plan, and concurred in it. Communication was by telephone. Wire was being laid along the route of advance to the point where the column was to split and leave the road. This wire was being kept up with the leading company.

About thirty minutes later it was dark enough to prohibit enemy observation of the column and the advance was continued. The machine guns had ceased to fire either because of darkness or because of the two squads which had been sent after them.

(28)

OCCUPATION OF THE OBJECTIVE

Until this time the movement had been downhill, but now
(28) Personal Knowledge.

the advance was uphill and cross country. It was very dark. Numerous mule trails crossed the route of advance after paralleling it for short distances. This combination of circumstances, plus the physical condition of the men, confused and retarded the advance to such an extent that it was 2300 hours before the company arrived in the area of the objective. Almost five hours had been consumed in traveling less than a mile. (28)

Now that a higher elevation had been reached, visibility was better than it had been earlier in the evening. Apparently the top of Hill 731 had been reached and it appeared to afford a better than average defensive position. Examination of the map by the flickering flame of a Zippo lighter confirmed the company commander's belief that the goal for the night had been reached. Directly to the front there was a garden and a wheat field. The wheat had been cut, leaving only stubble in the field. The ground was level and provided good observation and fields of fire to the front for as far as one could see. Actually, one could see less than two hundred yards but in the poor light it appeared farther. (See Map E)

The 1st Platoon was placed in position in front of and to the right or south of the church, generally along the road. Since that portion of the 2nd Platoon which had been sent after the enemy machine guns had not yet returned it was necessary to assign its mission to the 3rd Platoon which took positions to the left or north of the 1st Platoon. The platoons were directed to provide security by putting out listening posts to their front. The 3rd Platoon was to send out a patrol five hundred yards to the front to determine the nature of the ground and, of course, the presence of any enemy that might be there. The 1st Platoon was to provide the patrols to

(28) Personal Knowledge.

to Company B about 500 yards to the right on Hill 796. Just to the right of the church generally and in rear of the platoon positions there was a house, barn, winery, and a number of other small buildings. The 2nd Platoon, minus the two squads, was assigned the mission of investigating these buildings. (29)

By the time the accomplishment of these tasks was well under way it became evident that Company C, which was to have followed Company A and gone into position on the left flank, had become disorganized enroute up the hill and could not be depended upon to secure the left flank of the battalion.

The 3rd Platoon of Company A was shifted to the left to perform the missing company's task and the 1st Platoon was spread out to take care of all of A Company's area. During the night small groups of Company C arrived at the position and were directed to take up positions on the left under the 3rd Platoon leader. Eventually an officer from Company C arrived to take command of these groups and by morning the companies were disposed generally as originally had been planned. The two squads from the 2nd Platoon sent out the previous evening to silence the machine gun arrived just before dawn with one German prisoner. (30)

At dawn the company commander, after about two hours sleep, was rudely awakened by one of his platoon leaders with the remark, "Hey, Captain! Come over here and take a look". The captain reluctantly arose, walked over to the platoon leader and looked. To his astonishment he saw directly to his front about 200 yards away a rocky ridge about 100 feet higher than the ground occupied by the company and extending generally from the northeast to the southwest. Germans could be seen all along the ridge. They had apparently just awakened and were

(29) Personal Knowledge; (30) Personal Knowledge.

More definite statement needed.

walking about stretching, indulging in horseplay, and attending to their personal needs. One shot put an end to their dawn activities, at least on the side of the ridge facing the company.

The patrol from the 3rd Platoon that was to have patrolled the front during the night had evidently failed to accomplish its mission. The company commander, too, had failed. He had not led his company to the designated hill and as a result found his company in a position from which they might easily be dislodged. In addition he and the 3rd Platoon leader had failed to supervise properly the patrol after assigning its mission.

A hasty inspection of the ridge occupied by the enemy disclosed that near the southwest end of the ridge there was a spur that at one time had probably been an extension of the ridge but had been separated from the ridge by years of erosion. The side of this spur facing the enemy was steep and appeared to be difficult if not impossible to negotiate. Erosion had made a cut about 50 yards wide between the ridge and spur. (31)

Without attention?

Although the enemy had not been seen on this spur, it was with little hope of success that the company commander directed the 3rd platoon leader to send a patrol to this terrain feature. In the event sufficient space was available the lieutenant was to occupy the position with his entire platoon. For some undetermined reason, the enemy had failed to occupy the spur and the platoon was able to go into position there without opposition. Occupation of this position placed the 3rd Platoon almost in front of the 2nd Platoon, opening a gap about 200 yards wide between A and C Companies. Wire was laid to the platoon and communication with sound power telephones was established.

Was a covered route available to the spurs?

(31) Personal Knowledge.

The occupation of this new position was completed about 0700 hours 29 July. There had been no communication between the company and battalion headquarters since the previous evening, except by runner. Another runner now was dispatched to report this new development. (32)

Shortly after the runner was dispatched, wire reached the company and telephone communication with battalion was established. The situation was reported to the battalion commander. He indicated that the companies should continue to attempt to gain improved positions. He would come up to look over the situation and determine a course of action as soon as he could negotiate the hill.

The platoon leader of the 3rd Platoon reported by telephone that he had located numerous enemy positions only about 50 to 75 yards from his platoon positions. He also reported that the spur was sufficiently large to permit employment of another platoon there.

After a reconnaissance of the spur the company commander moved his 1st Platoon to positions to the right of the 3rd Platoon on the spur.

Since the first shot had been fired early in the morning the enemy had placed rifle and machine gun fire on any target that presented itself. In addition, they occasionally fired just on suspicion. Indirect fire was limited to an occasional mortar concentration, just enough to be annoying.

About this time there was pointed out to the company commander several scattered enemy personnel in the woods and olive grove in the left rear of the company area. They seemed to be wandering in the general direction of the enemy positions. The 2nd Platoon, with the company machine guns attached, was placed in positions to cover this threat.

(32) Personal Knowledge.

By 0800 hours all 60mm mortar ammunition that had been brought up the night before had been expended. Small carrying parties had been sent down the hill to bring up more to replenish the supply, but the ammunition was being expended faster than it could be carried. An agreement was reached with Company C whereby they should send an entire platoon, that had not yet been committed, for more ammunition.

By 1000 hours the platoon carrying party returned with enough mortar ammunition to support a local attack that had been planned by Company C. This attack was in such an area that it could not be supported by A Company's direct fire weapons.

The attack was executed with excellent support from the mortars of Companies A, D, and C but with little effective artillery support. The company commander of Company C, who had formerly commanded the mortar platoon from Company D, personally coordinated the attack with that platoon. The attack apparently had not been properly coordinated with the battalion commander, which probably accounted for the ineffectiveness of the artillery support. (33)

Soon after the launching of the attack by Company C an enemy mortar which was causing considerable trouble was observed by the platoon leader of the left forward platoon of Company A. This mortar was destroyed by one of the Company A mortars with three rounds. The battalion was no longer bothered by enemy mortar fire. Later it was found that this enemy 81mm mortar had been located within 20 feet of the enemy's most forward positions and where it could be observed from the spur that had not been occupied by the Germans.

C Company's attack failed to gain any ground or improve the company's position, however, it did achieve some measure (33) Personal Knowledge.

*What
target area
being
engaged?*

of success in that about thirty Germans surrendered. The surrender, as arranged, was to have consisted of four enemy aid men and two wounded enemy soldiers, but the remainder of those captured just followed them. These prisoners reported that there were about 250 troops in the enemy position. They also reported that their officers had departed the previous evening after directing the troops to hold at all costs. (34)

SUPPORT OF THE ATTACK

After this unsuccessful attack the battalion commander decided to attack the position with Company B. Company B had shortly before been directed to leave its position on Hill 796 and rejoin the battalion. The attack was to be made in the gap between Companies A and C. It was to be supported by the artillery, all the battalion supporting weapons, and by the fire of all the weapons of Companies A and C.

By 1600 hours Company B was in the attack position and prepared to commence the attack. All arrangements and coordination for supporting fires had been completed. (35)

From A Company's forward platoons many enemy positions in the caves and rocks directly in front of the attacking company had been located and could be covered by riflemen. The platoon leaders of the 1st and 3rd Platoons assigned men to cover each known or suspected enemy position in this area. These men were directed to cover assigned enemy targets to the exclusion of all others unless otherwise directed. Men in each platoon to whom no specific targets were assigned were divided into two groups. One of these groups was to fire on any target that might appear in the area during the attack. The remaining and smaller group, consisting of 3 or 4 men, was to fire under the direct control of the platoon (34) Personal Knowledge; (35) Personal Knowledge.

leader. The machine gun section which had been moved forward to positions on the spur for the attack was to cover the entire area.

These two platoons had been very close to the enemy positions for several hours and had been able to spot practically all the positions from which fire might be delivered on the attacking company. The assignment of targets by the platoon leaders was detailed and definite. Each and every hole, depression, boulder, cave, or any other place that might hold an enemy soldier was covered by a rifleman with but one task.

After the lifting of the preparatory fires of the supporting weapons Company B jumped off in the attack. Company C on the left was engaging the enemy by fire. To the enemy in front of Company C the attacking company presented a poor target and little fire was met from that direction.

From positions directly to the front of the attacking company some fire was delivered. These were the positions that Company A had covered in such detail. As a result of the volume and accuracy of the fire being placed on these enemy positions by Company A this fire proved to be ineffective and soon ceased altogether. Those enemy who had been foolhardy enough to attempt to fire had exposed themselves and were eliminated by the men of Company A. (36)

The coverage of the area and the accuracy of the fire by Company A proved to be so complete, accurate, and effective that Company B was able to attack over 200 yards of open terrain and overcome the well entrenched enemy with the loss of only one man. By dark the enemy position had been captured. (37)

After B Company's successful assault of the position those enemy soldiers who were able either fled or surrendered. A (36) Personal Knowledge; (37) A-4, p. 8A.

large number were found dead in their positions. Small groups of the beaten enemy were routed out of caves in the rear of the enemy positions for several hours after the successful attack of the position. There was little or no fight left in them and nearly a hundred prisoners were taken.

(38)

The strongpoint had been reduced and a safe route of advance had been secured.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

An examination of the action described in this narrative reveals that Company A was assigned a routine task, one to which any rifle company must expect to be assigned at any time while in the combat zone. In carrying out its mission this company in at least one instance demonstrated the effectiveness of accepted doctrine and on the other hand demonstrated many instances of the deplorable results that may be expected when careless mistakes are made and the principles of accepted doctrine are not followed.

Some of the errors made might be attributed to the physical condition of the officers and men of Company A, -- tired officers and men who had been without sleep for 36 hours, and who had enjoyed scarcely a full night's rest in three weeks. Other errors might be charged to the haste in which this simple operation was planned and its execution was begun.

To sum up, in the sequence in which they occurred, some of the more important points were:

1. Although time was of the essence if the battalion was to occupy the objective before nightfall, it is believed that as little as five extra minutes for the reconnaissance and issuance of the order, in addition to five minutes actually

(38) A-4, p. 8A.

allowed, would have paid huge dividends. Had this time been spent in orienting the company commanders and in allowing them to study the one available map and the terrain, ground which they had never seen before, far more than five minutes would have been saved.

2. Maps of the area which were in the hands of the battalion should have been issued in sufficient time. Although the battalion commander should be commended for relieving the companies of the burden of maintaining a library of maps, better planning on the part of his staff in issuing maps when needed is indicated.

3. The company commander of Company A used poor judgment in assuming what the trace of a road would be in such mountainous country. He should have verified his assumption. He had the means available and should have used it before he was forced to halt the entire battalion column in order to get himself oriented.

4. A knowledge of the hours when the sun and moon rise and set often in the past war enabled small unit commanders and staff officers as well as those of higher echelons to make important and wise decisions. The leaders and staff officers of small units should be taught to acquire such knowledge.

5. Upon arrival at what he thought was the objective the company commander should have taken more positive action to determine the nature of the terrain to his immediate front. Stricter supervision by both the company commander and the platoon leader of the patrol sent out for this purpose might have prevented the company's being surprised the following morning. The designation of a recognizable terrain feature for the patrol to visit might also have resulted in the accomplishment of the patrol's mission.

6. The manner in which Company C arrived at the objective demonstrated that a lack of discipline and supervision existed in that company that night. Discipline and supervision cannot be relaxed at any time and must be intensified during movement at night.

7. Failure of the enemy to secure his flank, by occupying the spur, hastened the fall of his position. Half a dozen men in position on this key terrain feature probably would have prevented its occupation by Company A for several hours. In turn this would have prevented Company A from supporting the attack of Company B so effectively.

8. If the report of the prisoners may be believed then *the* enemy's officers certainly exhibited poor leadership in deserting their troops.

9. The successful attack by Company B of so well an entrenched enemy over about two hundred yards of comparatively open ground with the loss of but a single man certainly demonstrated the soundness of the doctrine of a well coordinated fire support plan in the attack.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons learned or emphasized follow:

- Good ideas but not too well stated.*
1. Even though a minimum of time is allowed reconnaissance should be thorough.
 2. Assumptions regarding terrain and routes will often result in delay or disaster, especially in mountainous terrain.
 3. Strict discipline must prevail and stricter supervision must be exercised during night movements, even though it only be a movement in column.
 4. It is imperative that the supervision step of troop leading procedure be carried out to the fullest extent.
 5. In the organization of a defensive position or a strong-point, failure to organize key terrain on the flanks courts disaster.

6. A maneuver force with excellent fire support can
attack successfully an excellent enemy position and suffer a
minimum of casualties.

7. A knowledge of the times of first daylight and darkness
will often assist a commander of a small unit in making a wise
decision.