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**THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3D BN., 104TH INFANTRY (26TH INF. DIV.)
IN THE DRIVE THROUGH THE PALATINATE, 13-20 MARCH 1945
(RHINELAND CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of a Battalion Executive Officer)**

**Type of operation described: BATTALION IN THE ATTACK
AND THE PURSUIT**

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BIBLIOGRAPHY

- A-1 Capture of Saar-Moselle Triangle and Trier
(XX Corps Operational Report, 15 December
1944--12 March 1945)
- A-2 Uncovering Siegfried Line and the Drive Through
Palatinate (XX Corps Operational Report,
13 March--25 March 1945)
- A-3 26th Division History - World War II
- A-4 History of a Combat Regiment (104th Infantry)

There are no further documents of any description relating to this operation available in the Academic Library, and, as a result, the bulk of the material in this document is based on the personal knowledge and memory of the Battalion Executive Officer.

**THE OPERATIONS OF THE 3D BN., 104TH INFANTRY (26TH INF. DIV.)
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INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operations of the 3d Battalion, 104th Infantry, 26th Infantry Division, in the drive through the Palatinate from Irsch, Germany, 13 March 1945, to Landstuhl, Germany, 20 March 1945, at which time the division was pinched out by the 80th Infantry Division on the north and the 10th Armored Division on the south.

In order to orient the reader properly, it will be advisable to describe the circumstances leading up to the beginning of this operation, one of the most spectacular of the division's actions in World War II.

The German offensive in the Ardennes from December 1944 to the end of January 1945 had developed into a costly operation for them in men and equipment. The "Bulge" had been squeezed out and the remainder of the attacking force had been driven back into the Siegfried Line. (1)

During February 1945, XX Corps had been attacking in the Saar-Moselle triangle, which was a strip of Germany lying between the Saar and the Moselle Rivers, and with its apex formed by the juncture of the two rivers. By 2 March, they had been successful in capturing the city of Trier and in clearing the area contained in the so-called triangle. Trier was one of the chief communications centers in western Germany and guarded the entrance to the Moselle corridor, through which an attacker might drive to Koblenz and the Rhine. Furthermore, it was a vital hinge in the Siegfried Line and the enemy who held it, held the key to the defenses, both of the Saar Basin and of the Hifel. (2)

The XX Corps left flank was now secure for the impending attack to the Rhine.

(1) A-4, p. 99; (2) A-1, p. 1.

XX Corps operational report says, "With the fall of Trier and the successful conclusion of XII Corps' operations north of the Moselle River, the Saar Basin and the adjoining Palatinate region represented Germany's only substantial holdings west of the Rhine River. This area, in which was to be staged the final phase of the campaign to destroy the German armies west of the Rhine, was hemmed in on three sides by American forces." (3)

The XII Corps was on the north along the Moselle River to the Rhine at Koblenz. The XX Corps was to the west along the Saar from the Ruwer at Trier to Saarlautern. The XXI Corps was on the west, south of the XX Corps from Saarlautern to Saarguemines along the Saar River. To the south between Saarguemines and Hagenau were the XV Corps and VI Corps. (4)

In this large triangle were approximately 55,000 Germans with their backs to the Rhine River. They were in an unenviable position, in that the Rhine River constituted a barrier which precluded anything but a most carefully planned withdrawal beyond it. (5)

"As the hour of decision approached, it became increasingly more evident that the enemy, with his characteristic reluctance to abandon ground, even when that ground had become untenable, had no intention of withdrawing behind the superb natural defense line of the Rhine River. An unparalleled opportunity now existed for the destruction in place of the First and Seventh German Armies." (6)

Subsequent to emerging from the Ardennes Campaign, in which the 26th Infantry Division suffered heavy casualties, the division received full replacement of officers, men, and equipment, and was ordered to relieve the 95th Infantry Division, which was holding the Saarlautern bridgehead. This was an active defense mission, and offered a welcome opportunity to give much needed weapons training and battle orientation to the preponderance of new men who had recently arrived directly from the United States.

On 4 March 1945, the 95th Infantry Division began the relief of the

26th Infantry Division in the Saarlautern bridgehead, and the 26th Infantry

Division started moving north to the vicinity of Saarburg with the new mission of attacking through the 94th Infantry Division from the bridgehead across the Saar River. By 8 March 1945, all elements of the division had arrived in the Saarburg area. (7)

The 104th Infantry Regiment assembled in the vicinity of Ockfen, and, on 6 March 1945, began the relief of elements of the 94th Infantry Division. A strong counterattack by elements of the German 2d Mountain Division interrupted this relief, which had been completed by the 1st Battalion, and only partially completed by the 2d and 3d Battalions. It was decided to withdraw the 2d and 3d Battalions without further continuance of the relief, and to leave the 1st Battalion in place. This was due to a change in plan which involved the use of three infantry divisions attacking abreast, namely the 26th, the 80th and the 94th, rather than having only the 26th attack through the 94th Division's positions.

The 1st Battalion now held a line on the XX Corps' right flank, extending some 2000 yards due east from the Saar River in the vicinity of Hamm. The 2d and 3d Battalions moved into a large empty German hospital in the town of Beurig, where they were to remain until the jump-off on 13 March 1945. This period, from 7 March to 12 March 1945, was spent in maintenance of equipment, in instruction to correct errors committed in previous combat, and in extensive reconnaissance patrolling to fix definitely the enemy positions in front of the 1st Battalion.

Field Order No. 18, Headquarters XX Corps, issued 10 March 1945, revealed that the XX Corps, consisting of the 26th, 80th, 94th and 65th Infantry Divisions, the 10th Armored Division and the 3d Cavalry Group, was to attack southeast on 13 March 1945 from the Saarburg bridgehead.

The mission of the 26th Infantry Division (Reinforced) was to attack south in zone at 0300 hours, 13 March 1945, to reduce the Siegfried Line and enemy defenses within the zone, and to maintain contact with the 65th

~~In front of the 26th Infantry Division (Reinforced) flank, and the 80th Infantry Division~~
on the left (north) flank. (8)

(7) A-3, p. 36; (8) A-2, p. 13.

The 26th Infantry Division Field Order directed that the 104th and the 328th Infantry Regiments be in the attacking echelon, 104th on the left.

The 101st Infantry would be division reserve.

The 104th Infantry Command Post was to open at Serrig at 130300 March.

The line of departure was to be the line held by the 1st Battalion. (9)

Company A, 778th Tank Battalion, Company C, 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion, Battery A, 390th AAA Battalion (A.W.) and Company B, 101st Engineers (C) were attached to the 104th Infantry.

The regimental objective was to be the seizure of the bridges over the Seffers Branch in the vicinity of Bachem.

The 2d Battalion was to attack through the 1st Battalion at 130300 March, at which time the 1st Battalion would revert to regimental reserve.

A special task force, known as Task Force Donaldson, was formed with two platoons of Company A, 778th Tank Battalion, a platoon of Company C, 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion, a platoon of Battery A, 390th AAA Battalion (A.W.), consisting of eight half-tracks, mounting either quadruple .50 caliber machine guns, or dual .50 caliber machine guns with a coaxial 37 mm gun, 3d platoon, Company B, 101st Engineer Battalion (C), Cannon Company, 104th Infantry, AT Company, 104th Infantry, Company K, 104th Infantry, and a special medical section from the 3d Battalion medical section. The balance of the 3d Battalion would be available as a Task Force reserve to be committed on order of the Regimental Commander.

The task force was to be commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Hugh G. Donaldson, who had returned recently from hospitalization resulting from battle wounds.

The 3d Battalion was commanded by Lieutenant Colonel Howard G. Dellert, who had been assigned to this command shortly after Lieutenant Colonel Donaldson had been evacuated.

(9) A-4, p. 100.

GEOGRAPHICAL FEATURES

The terrain, with which we will be concerned for this operation, is varied, and, in places, is not favorable to military operations. The Saarland and the Palatinate (or the Pfalzer Bergland, as it is known to the Germans) covers approximately 4000 square miles, bounded on the north by the Moselle River, on the west by the Saar River, on the south by the German border between Saarguemines and Lauterbourg, and on the east by the Rhine River. South of the Moselle River lie the Hunsbruck Mountains, characterized by steep and heavily wooded ridges, which are cut by deep valleys. The Nahe River separates the Hunsbruck Mountains from the more level area of the Palatinate and forms a narrow valley. The Palatinate, extending northeast from Merzig and Saarlautern to the Rhine at Mainz, forms a huge drainage saddle between the Hunsbruck Mountains to the north and the Hardt Mountains to the south. It is the doorway from the Lorraine Plateau to the valley of the Rhine. The terrain is open and undulating about 1300 feet in elevation, surmounted by steep hills, some of which reach heights of over 2000 feet, and lie generally in broken ridges with steep slopes to the southwest.

In spite of the fact that this was difficult terrain from a military standpoint, it still afforded the best available passage from the Saar River to the Corps objective, the Rhine valley in the vicinity of Mainz. (10)

NARRATIVE

At 130300 March, the 2d Battalion, 104th Infantry, jumped off through the line held by the 1st Battalion. The Germans had had plenty of time to prepare to meet this attack, and progress was painfully slow. In this heavily wooded area, they had placed a large quantity of booby traps, anti-personnel mines and antitank mines. As our troops attempted to negotiate these mine fields, they were met with heavy concentrations of mortar, artillery, nebelwerfer and rocket fire.

(10) A-2, p. 1.

Colonel Ralph A. Palladino, the Regimental Commander, was anxious to reach the objective, and, at 1245, committed Task Force Donaldson around the left flank of the 2d Battalion with an initial objective of reaching the Britten-Bachem Road.

This attack had progressed only about 150 yards beyond the line of departure, when the task force encountered heavy mortar, nebelwerfer and artillery fire. One half-track of the 390th AAA Battalion was knocked out at this time by a mortar shell. One self-propelled tank destroyer of the 818th Tank Destroyer Battalion was put out of action by a direct hit from an enemy self-propelled gun, estimated to be an 88 mm. Almost simultaneously, a medium tank, belonging to the 778th Tank Battalion, ran over an antitank mine and was disabled. The forward movement of the task force was painfully slow, because of the mines and booby traps which had to be located and removed from its path. The engineer platoon was employed in this task which was especially hazardous, due to the fact that they were exposed all this time to shell fire. There were also enemy caves and pillboxes to be reduced, which added to the difficulty. By 1630, the task force had reached the high ground northwest of Greimerath on the west side of the Zerf-Losheim Road, where it proceeded to reorganize. The unit had suffered approximately 25 casualties to this point, two of them officers. Company K had lost its commanding officer and nineteen men; the antiaircraft platoon had lost its commanding officer and two men; and the engineer platoon had lost two enlisted men of the mine removal detail.

As the reorganization was being completed, the task force was hit by a German counterattack, the strength of which was estimated to be an infantry battalion reinforced with tanks. This attack was of such size and fury that the Task Force Commander requested the Regimental Commander to commit the remainder of the Third Battalion, which was in an assembly area southeast of Irsch, in order to hold the position. The Regimental Commander agreed readily, and ordered the Third Battalion to reinforce the positions of Task Force Donaldson. By darkness, after a stiff battle, the enemy force withdrew

and the Regimental Commander ordered the Task Force and the Third Battalion Commanders to hold their present position and dig in for the night.

That evening, Lieutenant Colonel Donaldson received orders assigning him to the 328th Infantry, effective at once, and command of the task force then passed to Lieutenant Colonel Dellert, Commander of the Third Battalion. Lieutenant Colonel Dellert placed Captain Bencivenni, the Regimental Anti-tank Company Commander, in charge of these mechanized units in order to facilitate their control, and the task force then became the Third Battalion, Reinforced.

In the meantime, the Battalion Command Post had displaced to a pillbox about five hundred yards west of the Zerf-Losheim Road.

By this time, the 80th Division had reached the high ground south of Greimerath, overlooking Bergen. (11)

At 0615, 14 March, the Third Battalion, with the mission of seizing crossings over the Seffers Branch at Bachem, attacked south toward the next high ground. Again the rugged wooded terrain, the caves and pillboxes, and the mines and booby traps retarded the movement to such a degree that the attack bogged down. The terrain was impassable to armor, and it was necessary to move the tanks and vehicles by bounds over the Zerf-Losheim Road, which was just over the boundary in the 80th Division zone. The Battalion Commander desired to utilize the shock action of his mechanized units by attacking along this road, in conjunction with his infantrymen. He felt that this blow would be sufficient to overrun the resistance to his immediate front, and allow him to accomplish his mission of seizing the bridges at Bachem. Therefore, he explained the situation to the Regimental Commander and requested permission, through channels, to use the road.

At about 1000, while the Battalion Commander was waiting for permission to put his plan into effect, the Commanding General of the 80th Division entered the Battalion Command Post, and informed him that the road he was planning to use was in the 80th Division zone, and, further, that he would

(11) A-4, p. 100.

vacate this road immediately. The Battalion Commander attempted to explain his difficult situation, and the fact that he had requested permission through channels for the use of this road; but this explanation was of no avail.

As soon as the General had left, the Battalion Commander contacted the Regimental Commander and told him of the developments.

In view of the fact that a daylight advance through that wooded and precipitous terrain would be slow and very costly, the Regimental Commander ordered a sneak night attack. It was believed that the battalion could negotiate these woods, unbeknown to the enemy, under cover of darkness more speedily and with a minimum of casualties.

All equipment would have to be hand-carried, including heavy weapons, ammunition, medical supplies and communication equipment. Therefore, it was decided that only items necessary for the accomplishment of the mission would be taken, and that the remainder, including all armor and vehicular transportation, would be left with the Battalion Executive Officer in the vicinity of the Command Post.

The battalion moved out at about 2030 in a column of companies on an azimuth of approximately 157 degrees. Radio silence was ordered and noise and light discipline strictly enforced.

From this time, until the following morning, 15 March, the Battalion Executive Officer had no contact with the Battalion Commander. Finally at 0300, a radio message was received from the Battalion Commander to the effect that he was halting the battalion until daylight. Part of his unit had become separated, and he could only guess where he was. The woods were so dense and the going so difficult, that it was impossible to stay oriented as to his exact position. They had had no enemy contact.

After daylight, the Battalion Commander took action to collect his scattered units. By 0900, he had recovered and reorganized his troops. He decided that his best move would be to head east toward the main road in order to orient himself, and then, he able to continue the attack to the

south, by guiding on that prominent terrain feature. Accordingly, he again moved out in a column of companies, with Company K deployed in the lead.

At about 1200, 15 March, Captain Bencivenni located the Regimental Commander of the 80th Division's 319th Infantry, which had just arrived in the vicinity. This regiment was assuming the 80th Division right sector, in order to fill the gap being caused by the execution of a pivot movement to the east. Captain Bencivenni explained the situation and his desire to attack along the main road with the armor. The Regimental Commander said he had no objections, since he was not yet ready to move, and that it would undoubtedly aid him in his own attack.

After this coordination had been made, Captain Bencivenni alerted his column and moved out at about 1400 hours. Men of the antitank company, employed as riflemen, were riding on the tanks and tank destroyers, which were in the lead. As this force neared the bend in the road north of Britten, the Commander observed an enemy column approaching on foot. By arm and hand signal, he quickly deployed his tanks and infantry, and opened fire on the German column, which was taken completely by surprise. The enemy was thoroughly disorganized by this sudden volume of fire and scattered in a disorderly manner, in an attempt to escape across the open field to the east of the road.

By mere coincidence, the Third Battalion had reached the edge of the woods just below the armored column, and immediately took the enemy under fire from the flank. The results of this attack approached a massacre. In a matter of minutes, the Germans who were still alive, surrendered. Forty-five prisoners and four 105 mm artillery pieces were taken and approximately one hundred enemy dead were counted.

The Battalion Commander notified the Executive Officer by radio of the situation, and instructed him to displace the Command Post. He also stated that he was continuing his attack to the south.

At this time, and with very little opposition, elements of the 80th

~~Division had begun to occupy Britton.~~

Accordingly, the Command Post started moving forward, and, at about 1500 hours, was reestablished in a camouflaged, reinforced concrete stable on the west edge of Britten.

The attack continued against only scattered resistance, with the infantry cleaning out pockets in the woods, and the armor moving along the hard road which was now in our zone.

By darkness, the battalion had seized the bridges over the Seffers Branch intact, and continued to move into Bachem, where it captured a small group of enemy. The battalion moved to the east edge of the town, and took another small bridge over a tributary of the Seffers Branch. A perimeter defense was set up, and movement stopped, awaiting a new mission.

It was now about 0300 hours, 16 March, and the Battalion Commander sent a messenger in a jeep back to guide the Command Post group forward to a new location in Bachem. The new Command Post was set up at about 0500 in a house on the west edge of Bachem.

At about 0900 hours, the Regimental Commander moved into town and established a forward Command Post in a house across the street. He sent for Lieutenant Colonel Dellert and told him that information from the Division Commander indicated that resistance had crumbled all along the front. He ordered Lieutenant Colonel Dellert to motorize as much of his battalion as possible, and to start moving at once to Reimsbach with a new mission of seizing crossings over the Prims River. The remainder of the battalion would start out on foot and would be picked up by fifteen kitchen trucks, which were being attached to the Third Battalion. Colonel Palladino said that the trucks would pick up the troops in about two hours, as they first had to be unloaded and come all the way from Serrig.

One of the two tank platoons would be detached from the Third Battalion effective at once.

Company L was mounted on the tanks and Headquarters and M Companies crowded on organic transportation. This column moved out at about 1030.

Companies K and I, with Captain Lloyd E. Nobles, the Battalion S-3, started out on foot.

The move of the mechanized column to Reimsbach was made without incident. The enemy apparently had withdrawn completely from this area.

Colonel Palladino, with his advanced echelon Command Post, rode with the column.

Upon arrival in the town of Reimsbach, a Command Post was established, and Company L was sent to occupy the high ground to the southeast and secure the area. A patrol from Headquarters Company patrolled the town from house to house to check for enemy military personnel. All these tasks were accomplished at about 1300.

At 1400, Companies I and K arrived on the Service Company trucks. Colonel Palladino ordered the battalion, now completely motorized, to move to Aussen and seize a bridge over the Prims River. After the capture of the bridge, they would cross and hold the bridgehead for the remainder of the division.

The battalion moved out at 1500 and advanced to the high ground overlooking Aussen. Here, the head of the column was taken under enemy artillery fire and forced to deploy. Lieutenant Colonel Dellert, who was with the column, ordered an immediate attack on the town. The formation would be a column of companies, with Company L and the tanks leading. The Cannon Company, tank destroyer platoon and antiaircraft platoon would support the attack by direct fire from positions on this high ground.

Under cover of this supporting fire, the battalion moved into the town against relatively ineffective small arms fire. Once inside the town, however, the attack developed into house to house fighting.

The Battalion Commander, who was by this time on the west edge of the town, still did not have any information on the bridges. As it was getting late in the afternoon, and he needed the information as soon as possible, he requested an artillery liaison plane to fly a reconnaissance mission and ascertain which bridges, if any, were still intact. The request was granted at once, and, very shortly, a plane appeared over the area. The pilot

reported that the bridge at Aussen had been destroyed, but the bridge at Huttersdorf, 1500 yards to the south, was intact.

By this time, Aussen had been cleared. In order to reach the bridge as quickly as possible, the Battalion Commander sent one platoon of Company L, mounted on the antiaircraft half-tracks, to capture and secure the bridge without delay. The tanks, tank destroyers and the remainder of Company L would follow, as quickly as possible. Captain Eugene Cristol, the Company L Commander, went with the half-tracks.

This bridge was outside the regimental zone, but since these were the first units of the division to reach the river, Lieutenant Colonel Dellert used his own initiative in seizing the bridge.

As Captain Cristol's small force approached the bridge, it encountered intense artillery fire, and small arms fire from a group of enemy defending the bridge. In the ensuing fight, three half-tracks from this small task force were knocked out, four men were killed, and thirteen men were wounded. The west approaches to the bridge were secured about 1700. Shortly afterwards, the rest of Company L arrived on the tanks and tank destroyers, and with them was the engineer platoon. It was impossible to cross the bridge during daylight, due to the heavy fire from the other side of the river.

At dark, the engineers started removing mines from the approaches to the bridge, and, at about 1900 hours, Task Force St. Patrick of the 101st Infantry arrived on the scene. Although the bridge was in the zone of the 101st Infantry, its Regimental Commander gave permission for the Third Battalion to use the bridge until 2400.

At 1900 hours, the Battalion Command Post displaced to the new location in Aussen. Sporadic artillery concentrations were still landing in the town, and continued to do so all through the night.

Artillery shells were also landing on the bridge, and, although several casualties were suffered, the crossing by the Third Battalion and elements of the 101st Infantry continued through the night. The Division Engineers were employed in the construction of a Bailey bridge at Aussen.

By daylight on the 17th, the Third Battalion was completely across the river, and was continuing the attack toward Rummelbach. In this town, about seventy-five prisoners were taken and six multi-purpose 88 mm guns were captured and destroyed.

It was learned that this same morning over two hundred Germans were taken in the town of Buprich, by elements of the 101st Infantry. No one has ever been able to understand why this force did not attack Captain Cristol's small group on the afternoon before, when they had first reached the bridge.

By this time, it was apparent that the attack had developed into a pursuit. The mission for all units now was to push, as rapidly as possible, to the Rhine River.

A new attack order was received at the Battalion Command Post in Rummelbach from the Regimental Commander. It was an overlay type order and showed only what seemed an endless series of objectives.

The battalion (motorized) moved out immediately, and, by nightfall, against only scattered resistance, had captured Dirmingen. Five bridges were taken intact in the town, and seventy-five more prisoners were added to the fast mounting total. The battalion then reverted to regimental reserve, and remained in town until the afternoon of the next day. All but five of the attached kitchen trucks were taken away by the Regimental Commander for use by the Second Battalion.

Late in the afternoon, the battalion moved out by shuttling, and, at dark, entered Urexweiler, where about forty Germans were routed out of the houses in which they had been sleeping. Apparently, they had no leader, and had taken no security measures.

A Command Post was established in a hotel, and the battalion outposted the town for the remainder of the night.

At 0600, 19 March, the column again moved out by shuttling. There was sufficient transportation to carry all but one company. Men rode on every available piece of equipment. The Command Post was now mobile and accompanied

the column. All semblance of organized resistance had disappeared. Only occasional defended road blocks and isolated groups hampered the forward movement. By employing the engineer platoon with the infantry, the blocks were methodically and quickly reduced and the advance continued. By early evening, the battalion had reached Altenkirchen, which was outposted for the night. Trucks were sent back to Urexweiler to pick up Company K, which had been left, due to the lack of transportation.

On 20 March, Company L was left behind, and, at 0600, the battalion again moved out for the next objectives. Late in the afternoon, the city of Landstuhl was reached. Elements of the 10th Armored Division had already entered the city, and were busy rounding up prisoners. The order to halt in place was received from the Regimental Commander. The 26th Division had now been pinched out, by the 80th Division cutting in from the north, and by the 10th Armored Division to the south.

A Battalion Command Post was established in the city, and Company L was shuttled forward from Altenkirchen. The troops were quickly located in comfortable billets, and settled down with the prospect of a good night's sleep.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

A study of this operation reveals that, in the period from 13 to 20 March, the Third Battalion had not only participated in daylight and night attacks against a determined enemy, but also had had the exciting experience of a pursuit of the foe it had defeated.

There is no record of the number of enemy killed or captured available to the writer, but it is believed that the battalion did its share in the accomplishment of the regiment's mission.

The lack of suitable roads in the battalion zone before Bachem prevented the efficient use of the armor, and contributed greatly to the delay in reaching the town. It is quite possible that closer cooperation with the 80th Division at this time, would have resulted in fewer casualties and an earlier capture of the first objective, for the following reasons:

1. If the battalion had been able to use the Zerf-Losheim Road sooner, the enemy would have had less time to prepare his defenses and to lay mines after the attack of 13 March. There would have been fewer casualties, if these obstacles had not been encountered.

2. Maximum use of the shock action and fire power of the tanks, tank destroyers and multiple .50 caliber machine guns of the antiaircraft battery, in conjunction with attacking infantry, could have been realized by the earlier use of this road. It is conceivable that Bachem would have been captured at least twenty-four hours sooner.

The attack on the night of 14-15 March accomplished very little. Attempting to maintain contact on a dark night in heavy woods, over unknown territory, is practically impossible, for a unit as large as a battalion. In addition, the difficult going over the rough terrain impeded the advance of the men carrying heavy equipment.

It was only by happy coincidence, that the battalion was able to participate in the annihilation of the enemy at the road bend.

It is probable that the timely capture of the bridge over the Prims River, even though it was outside the Third Battalion zone, saved it from destruction at the hands of the enemy, and afforded the entire division quick passage of the river, enabling them to continue the pursuit.

The prompt action of the Regimental Commander when he motorized the Third Battalion at Bachem was commendable. By so doing, the battalion moved with such speed, that the enemy never had a chance to prepare effectively and man successive delaying positions. The mines and booby traps were conspicuous by their absence after the crossing of the Prims River. It was also apparent that the enemy did not have sufficient time to use what manpower he had properly. This was particularly indicated in the situation at Buprich, where 200 men had no influence on the operation, when they were capable of causing our units excessive delay and casualties at the bridge.

The employment of the engineer platoon well forward in the pursuit paid dividends. They were capable of removing all types of road blocks in

a short time with their special equipment, and, undoubtedly, saved the battalion from many delays.

By loading infantrymen on tanks and tank destroyers, and overloading other types of organic vehicles, less trucks are needed from outside sources to move an infantry battalion. This expedient was necessary to the success of this particular operation.

LESSONS

Some of the lessons to be learned from this operation are:

1. Night attacks, against anything but a limited objective, are hazardous operations, and should be resorted to only when all other lines of action have been carefully considered.
2. Coordination and cooperation of adjacent units are essential to the success of an operation as a whole. Commanders must keep the big picture in mind, and be willing to offer assistance to other units if it is within their power, and if their own operation is not being jeopardized by so doing.
3. Initiative is a must on the part of all commanders.
4. In the pursuit, engineers must be placed well forward in the column to enable them to employ their heavy equipment at once, and not waste valuable time attempting to double bank a long column on a narrow road.
5. Units as large as a rifle company can be shuttled in the pursuit when there is insufficient transportation, and speed is essential. In the event of unexpected enemy contact, the company being shuttled can be sent for and still arrive in ample time to influence the action, if needed.
6. When the enemy is withdrawing, exert the utmost pressure on him continuously. Don't give him the opportunity of getting well set for your attack.
7. The added shock power of armor employed with infantry is a highly desirable consideration when the terrain permits its use.
8. When the possibility of a withdrawal is indicated, careful coordination and planning are necessary in order to be able to use successive delaying positions effectively. A disorganized mob is of no value to any army.



