

*1st Infantry School
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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS COURSE
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THE OPERATIONS OF "I" COMPANY 3D
BATTALION, 26TH INFANTRY (1ST
INFANTRY DIVISION) IN THE
ATTACK ON AGY, FRANCE
SOUTHEAST OF OMAHA
BEACH, NORMANDY
9-11 JUNE 1944
(NORMANDY CAMPAIGN)
(Personal experience of a Platoon Leader)

Type of operation described: INFANTRY
COMPANY ATTACKING ENEMY, HOLDING
POSITION AFTER LOSING CONTACT
WITH REMAINDER OF BATTALION.

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ADVANCED INFANTRY OFFICERS CLASS NO. 2

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ORIENTATION

INTRODUCTION

This monograph covers the operation of "I" Company, 26th Infantry, 1st U. S. Infantry Division, in the capture of Agy, France, 9-11 June 1944, during the Normandy Campaign.

In order to orient the reader it will be necessary to discuss briefly the major events which lead up to this action.

On 6 June 1944 (D-Day) Operation Neptune was launched with the planned mission of securing a beachhead on the western coast of France, in the Normandy area; effect a build up of Allied troops and supplies for future operations aimed at ultimate defeat of the Axis forces on the continent of Europe. (1)

The initial ground action came early in the morning of 6 June 1944 when British and American paratroopers jumped inland from the planned invasion beaches of Normandy to secure assigned objectives and await link up with sea borne assault forces. (2)

The invasion plan called for the landing of the 21st Army Group, commanded by General Sir Bernard L. Montgomery, consisting of the Second British Army on the left and the First U. S. Army on the right.

(1) A-1, p. 1
(2) A-6, p. 22

The First Army was comprised of the V and VII corps. V corps on the left with the mission to secure a beachhead in the area between the Vire River and Port-en-Bessin and push inland toward Caumont and St Lo. (3) (See Map A)

The First Infantry Division to land in left sector of V corps and gain contact with the British Second Army. The 26th Infantry to be on extreme left of Division sector. (See Map A)

The 26th Infantry was to land as part of Force "B", assemble in the vicinity of Celleville and be prepared to attack and seize its D-Day objective, the high ground south and southeast of Tour-en-Bessin and to continue the attack to the southeast on order. Patrols were to contact the British along the Bayeux highway toward Bayeux. (4) See Map A)

The 3d Battalion's part of the regimental objective was to seize Ste Anne and Cussy one mile southeast of Tour-en-Bessin and contact the right elements of the British 50th Division toward Bayeux. (5) Be prepared to continue the attack to the southeast on order.

The overall mission of the 3d Battalion as its part of the plan in securing the beachhead was to be accomplished in three phases.

Phase 1. To secure its D-Day objective, Ste Anne and Cussy, contact elements of the British 50th Division and be prepared to attack to the southeast on regimental order.

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- (3) A-3, p. 175
(4) A-1, p. 33
(5) Personal knowledge

Phase 2. Seize and defend Agy as its intermediate objective and cut St Le-Bayeux highway and continue the attack to the southeast on regimental order.

Phase 3. Seize, secure and defend its portion of the regimental beachhead of Caumont and maintain contact with the British to the left. (6) (See Map A)

The landings were effected as scheduled at all points along the French coast, however a new threat to the mission came in the form of the 352d German Infantry Division.

The 352d Division had moved from St Le and reinforced the coastal defenses. This recent move was not known to Allied forces prior to the landings. (7)

The reinforcing by the enemy of its coastal defenses resulted in heavier casualties, a lesser degree of coordination, coupled with the necessity of diverting units from their assigned missions to assist in securing other objectives, it was not until late afternoon of 7 June that parts of the objectives were reached. (8)

Not until 0015 9 June was the 3d Battalion able to seize its D-Day objective. (9) (See Map B)

At 0300 hours, 9 June approximately three hours after arriving on its objective the 3d Battalion was hit with a determined German counterattack with "L" Company taking the full force. Complete confusion reigned until 0600 hours when control was regained. (10)

(6) Personal notes of Battalion Commander Lt. Col. John T. Corley.

(7) A-1, p. 110

(8) A-1, p. 119

(9) A-4, date line 9 June 1944

(10) A-4, date line 8 June 1944

"L" Company had held their positions and the Battalion was still securely on it's D-Day position, however the Germans still controlled the corridor between the British and American forces. (11) The Germans had lost two (2) officers, and ninety four (94) enlisted men captured and killed.

Their losses were extremely heavy in vehicles and equipment. The 3d Battalion had lost eleven (11) killed, thirty seven (37) wounded and seven (7) missing in action. (12)

THE GENERAL SITUATION

By 2400 hours 8 June the Allied forces had, with the exception of a narrow corridor between the V and VII corps, secured fifty miles of the French coast in depths up to seven (7) miles.

Fighting during period from 6 June to 9 June was characterized by the employment of regiments, at times all Battalion were on line and operating up to three thousand yards between front line Battalion. (13)

The enemy had shown great determination to hold out in fortified strong points, screened by wire and mines and making full use of hedgerows to conceal movement and positions. (14)

The overall mission now was to expand the lodgment for future operations by attacking to secure all beachhead objectives. Quote: (" On 9 June V corps was reinforced by the Second Infantry Division. Corps was ordered to advance

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- (11) A-3, p. 195
(12) A-4, date line 8 June 1944
(13) A-3, p. 195
(14) A-2, p. 25

rapidly to the south and west and secure a line Caumont-Cerisy-Forest-Isigny." (15)

The 1st Division planned its renewed attack with two regiments 18th Infantry and 26th Infantry abreast, 26th Infantry on the left.

The 26th Infantry to attack with the 2d Battalion and 3d Battalion abreast, 3d Battalion on the left. (See Map B)

The 3d Battalion to capture Agy, in its zone, cut the St Lo-Bayeux highway, vicinity Subles as its intermediate objective, and be prepared to continue the attack on order to secure its portion of the regimental beachhead objective, Caumont. (16) (See Map B)

The enemy situation was becoming more complex due to recent Allied thrusts. The initiative had now passed over to the Allies. The determined resistance of the enemy utilizing thick hedgerows and sunken roadbeds to their advantage, had slowed down the advance, nevertheless, these tactics would not stop the advance but were steadily wearing down the fighting efficiency of the enemy.

It was more in evidence that the enemy was less enthusiastic about becoming decisively engaged but was employing mobile units to delay, then withdraw.

Intelligence reports of 9 June indicated a possible build-up of enemy armor in the Cerisy Forest area. However barring the arrival of additional reinforcements, they had lost the possibility of passing to the offensive on the 1st Division Front. (17)

(15) A-2, p. 25
(16) A-3, p. 197
(17) A-3, p. 196

Enemy units identified on the 1st Division Front were 352d German Infantry Division and remnants of the 517th Mobile Battalion. Additional weakness was indicated when the reserves of the 352d were identified in the front lines. (18)
(See Map B)

The enemy forces in contact were losing faith in the word that reinforcements were on the way. They had started to surrender in larger numbers with slightly less resistance. Those captured stated that some artillery pieces had been destroyed and others had been abandoned; they also had great praise for the effectiveness and volume of our artillery fires.

The lack of enemy artillery fire in the Division area was significant. (19)

The 1st Division since landing at Omaha Beach 6 June had been attacking steadily almost day and night against stubborn enemy resistance and in terrain that favored the defenders; hedgerows and sunken roadbeds.

This was something new to men of the 1st Division. Although veterans of three campaigns, hedgerows presented a new and difficult problem.

Casualties during the period were moderate except for the 16th Infantry who had suffered over 1,000 casualties. (20)

Supplies were rapidly increasing and for the present were generally considered adequate.

(18) A-3, p. 197
(19) A-1, p. 122
(20) A-1, p. 109

The enemy had no more rest than the 1st Division and their supply and communication problem was mounting as a result of Allied air support.

This was off set by our lack of port facilities and bad weather, limiting supply unloading at Omaha beach. (21)

Lack of artillery fire, increased number of prisoners, coupled with defeat at the beach and a forced withdrawal were indications that morale of enemy troops was lowering, especially those in contact.

Generally, the combat efficiency of the opposing forces was excellent and considered equal. In accordance with Division Field Order No. 36, the 26th Infantry planned to attack with two battalions abreast on a four thousand yard front to seize the towns of Dodigny and Agy astride the Bayeux-St Lo highway.

The 3d Battalion on the left was to attack in column of companies, "A" Company 745th Tank Battalion attached, seize Agy and cut the Bayeux-St Lo highway as phase two (2) intermediate objective. (22)

DISPOSITION AND PLAN OF THE 3D BATTALION, 26TH INFANTRY

On the morning of 9 June the 3d Battalion was in a defensive position, Ste Anne-Cussy. (See Map B)

At 0800 hours orders were received from regiment to move out at 1330 hours toward their intermediate objective.

(23)

(21) A-1, p. 109

(22) A-3, p. 197

(23) A-4, date line 9 June 1944

For the planned attack the Battalion commander (Lt. Col. John T. Corley) outlined a specific route to be followed, order of march, "K" Company, advance guard; followed by Battalion command group; "I" Company; "L" Company; Headquarters Company minus Battalion anti-tank platoon; "M" Company; anti-tank Platoon.

The foot elements were to march in column of two's , one column on either side of the road, with the tanks of "A" Company 745th Tank Battalion in the center and dispersed throughout the column. (24)

I. P., R.J. A.. I. P. time 1330 hours. Radio silence except in an emergency.

THE COMPANY SITUATION

I Company maintained its place in the Battalion column without incident until the advanced guard had cleared R.J. B. (See Map B)

When the head of I Company came to the road junction the Battalion Commander ordered that I Company commanded by Capt. John Semanchyk, from Hazelton, Penna., take the right fork halting when the tail of the company had cleared the junction and await until he had reinforced the company by the attachment of tanks from the main column.

The battalion commander further stated when the tanks arrived for the company to continue the advance, protect the right flank of the battalion and attempt to gain contact with the 2d Battalion advancing on our right, and on arrival at R.J. C. to continue to objective even though the main column

(24) Personal knowledge

may have passed on or not yet arrived at that point.

THE COMPANY PLAN OF ATTACK

At approximately 1605 hours I Company with four tanks attached moved out toward R.J. C. in the order, 1st platoon as advanced guard, commanded by Lt. Charles M. Eggekrecht, Dunkirk, N. Y., company command group; 2nd platoon; commanded by Lee Matthews, New York, N. Y., weapons platoon, commanded by Lt. LaRue H. Ritter, Muncy, Penna. and Jack P. Hewitt, Delator, Ill., company headquarters; Lt. Vincent N. Shepard executive officer from South Burlington, Vt.; 3rd platoon, commanded by Lt. Grant S. Fisher, Detroit, Mich.

The point of the advance guard was made up of three riflemen, one bar team, one rocket launcher team and one tank, the remainder of the column with the advance guard and main body of prescribed intervals in column of two's one column on either side of the road and tanks dispersed in the center and throughout the column.

NARRATION

THE APPROACH MARCH OF I COMPANY

In the initial phases of the march the 1st platoon had flank guards out to the right and left of the column. Visibility was limited by the hedgerows from fifty to two hundred yards, fields being cut up in squares by high thick hedgerows and in the column view was obstructed due to sunken roadbeds which had embankments on either side in most cases

higher than the heads of the marching men.

As the column continued its march the flank guards were unable to keep pace and as they reported no friendly contact on either side they were called in and the company continued its advance without flank security.

The route the company was following was along the south slopes of the La Droine River, at times the road would follow along the military crest and in the distance the river would be visible, road nets along the valley floor, and hedgerows chopping up the country side giving the appearance of thousand of small garden plots. At other times and most usually, the terrain offered visibility limited to as little as a few yards.

However without incident at 1715 hours the head of the Company reported position at RJ. C.. On receipt of this message Capt. Semanchyk, Company Commander, ordered the point to turn right and continue to RJ. O. at Sandrine.

THE INITIAL CONTACT

At approximately 1800 hours as the point neared Sandrine RJ. D. they were fired on by a few enemy, apparently taking cover in the few buildings adjacent to the road.

The point immediately returned the fire, the tank firing its machine guns and cannon into the buildings. By now the support had been committed by Lt. Eggekrecht, and the enemy was pushed to the far end of the town. At this point a German staff car appeared around a curve in the road at a distance of seventy five yards. The first to take action

was the point rocket launcher team and to the amazement of all watching to see the effects, the rocket launcher when fired leaped violently out of the gunners hand, sailed through the air for about fifty yards, hit the road skidded along some distance more and came to a stop in the middle of the road a few feet from the car.

Equally amazed were the occupants of the car as they had brought the car to a halt but made no effort to scramble for safety. This proved to be their undoing as rifle fire had now riddled its entire front and for good measure the lead tank fired an armor piercing projectile shell which entered the radiator grill and came out in the vicinity of the rear bumper. On inspection of the launcher, it was found that a dent in the tube had caused the incident.

Firing had now quieted down except for a few scattered shots coming from the top stories of the buildings at the rear of the town.

THE ADVANCE RESUMED

The company commander ordered the advance continued along the road leading to the left. Lt. Eggekrecht, after leaving a squad of riflemen and the lead tank to guard the cross roads with instructions to bring up the rear of the column, continued to the left as ordered. Small arms fire was still harassing the column as it cleared a bend in the road and was obscured from view of the enemy still in Sandrine.

The column soon passed Chau-De-Agy, (See Map B) a large chateau surrounded by a heavy growth of tall timber with

flowery vines thickly covering the ground and lower branches of the trees.

As the head of the main body passed, the chateau, firing was heard up ahead and information came back that another German staff car approaching from the opposite direction had been riddled by small arms fire. In order for the lead tank to continue, it was necessary to clear the road and the tank itself was used for this task by pushing it over an embankment.

At 1845 hours, the point, by use of messenger, reported it had just entered the town of Les Roquellos and no enemy was encountered. The town was apparently clear.

When the main body entered the town Capt. Semanchyk ordered a halt and called the officers to his command post. Capt. Semanchyk stated that he had somewhere missed the correct route to be followed and further stated that he was not sure of the company's assigned objective.

By this time the French were gathering around the vicinity of the command post group. All seemed curious as this was their first glimpse of American troops.

After being assured that we were really Americans they seemed at ease and readily informed us that large bodies of German troops were in the area and that they believed the heaviest concentration was just a few kilometers east of town.

After receiving this information Capt. Semanchyk decided to retrace the route of march back to R.J. C. as he believed the Battalion objective was in that vicinity.

THE COUNTERMARCH

In accordance with Capt. Semanchyk's orders, the company was to countermarch in the reverse order, 3d platoon, weapons platoon, company command group, 2d platoon, 1st platoon. Tanks to be dispersed throughout the column. Lt. Fisher formed the advanced guard with his third platoon, at 1950 hours, the column was again on the move.

The company column had covered a distance of approximately one thousand yards and the point at point E (See Map B) when a sharp fire fight broke out. Approximately two hundred rounds of small arms ammunition was fired, then all was quiet. The point had surprised a horse cavalry reconnaissance company, from the 517 battalion 30th mobile brigade, going off the road into an assembly area and after the brief exchange of shots, the German company commander was severally wounded and all surrendered. Although tired from almost continuous marching since D-Day, some men reporting sore feet, they were generally in high spirit as they watched the Germans being lined up on the road. Their morale was slightly dampened by the report that the company commander's runner was a casualty due to the last action (the first since moving out that morning) and was in critical

condition.

By now the Germans had been searched and a head count totalled eighty two men and three officers, plus several fine saddle horses which were pressed into service as ammunition carriers, with our casualty aboard one of the tanks and the responsibility of guarding the prisoners delegated to the 2d platoon, the column again moved out at 2110 toward R.J. C.

When the main body reached the trail junction leading to St. Leonard, a halt was called by the company commander, and the platoon leaders again assembled with the command group.

Capt. Semanchyk told Lt. Fisher, third platoon leader (now leading) to be sure he did not miss the turn at R.J. D. and as it was now becoming quite late, he wanted the column to close up, the infantry to march well to the sides of the road and be extremely watchful of the tanks who were finding it difficult to remain astride the crown of the narrow country roads.

The French residents of St. Leonard had come out to greet the column, and as the column was preparing to move out a young man dispatched himself from the crowd, identified himself as a member of the F. F. I. and asked if he could be of any service. Capt. Semanchyk asked if he could lead the column to R.J. C. by reference to the map, and was assured that this would be done.

The Frenchman voiced surprise that we were not meeting heavy German resistance stating that numerous groups of Germans were known to be in the vicinity. Mostly unarmored reconnaissance and Infantry units.

The column again moved out, the Company Commander accompanied by the French F. F. I. member.

A motorcycle coming toward the point was fired on and another prisoner was added to company collection without interrupting the advance of the column.

THE ROAD BLOCK

It was now 2245 and completely dark, the head of the column was approaching R.J. D. the company commander accompanied by the Frenchman, had moved up to the head of the weapons platoon, the lead tank was close behind the point. Firing started in heavy volume up ahead. The company commander halted the weapons platoon and continued forward. Enemy anti-tank fire could be heard up ahead, this was answered by machine gun fire from our lead tank, its 75's could be heard. The range was close, not more than fifty yards. Tracers were zipping back over the column, by now firing started coming in from the right and left flank indicating that a possible move by the Germans to envelope the column.

At this time Lt. Shepard came up the column and asked about the company commander and continued on to the front when informed of the direction taken by Capt. Semanchyk.

Within a few minutes, the firing had slackened except for a few shots coming in from the flanks and an occasional burst of automatic weapons fire from the front. All platoon leaders were now at the head of the weapons platoon where they were joined by Lt. Shepard who informed them that Capt. Semanchyk, one member of the point, and the French F. F. I. member were killed by the last enemy action.

Lt. Shepard reported that sounds of enemy movement could be heard to the front and feared the company would be caught in the sunken roadbed from the flanks if action were not taken immediately.

Lt. Shepard summed up the situation by stating that two courses of action were possible, either move forward or to the rear, as tanks could not negotiate the steep banks from the roadbed, Lt. Shepard stated that he favored a defense for the night inasmuch as the Battalion position was not known to any member of the company. He then ask the platoon leaders for their recommendations.

All platoons reported the condition of the men, tired, sore feet and after brief halts the men had to be awakened individually to resume the march. Even while the front of the column was engaged in a fire fight, men at the tail were sound asleep. The 2d platoon was concerned about the prisoners and feared that they may break during movement in the dark.

It was finally agreed that the best course to follow was to disengage by movement to the rear and occupy the wooded area, Chau-De-Agy. This offered high ground, concealment, a good outline for a perimeter defense, although extremely large for a company, tanks could be moved off the highway by using the trail driveway leading up to the Chateau. (See Map B & C)

THE PERIMETER DEFENSE AT THE CHATEAU

Disengaging from the enemy was tedious and time consuming. The road was too narrow for tank turn around and it was necessary to back them approximately six hundred yards, in complete darkness and without the use of lights. Platoon leaders searched the road to assure no one was sleeping in the path of the tanks. Several men had to be literally stood on their feet, before being awakened. The movement to the rear was covered by the 3d platoon which was ordered to withdraw back to the company perimeter in 45 minutes.

Tanks finally arrived at the Chateau and went in position at 0115 hours. Due to the heavy timber and narrow trail, the first tank to leave the road was able to pull far enough into the wooded area to allow the other three tanks just sufficient room to clear the road and take up position behind an anti-tank ditch along the western side of the Chateau grounds.

The roar of the tank motors during the movement to position sounded many times louder than usual as everyone was trying to move quickly and quietly and as far away as they could possibly get from the rearing tanks.

Lt. Shepard directed the platoons to their position on the perimeter as they entered the woods.

1st platoon south, 2d platoon north and east, 3d platoon west, weapons platoon, company headquarters and the German prisoners were occupying the anti-tank ditch. (See Map C)

The tanks gave us the preponderance of fire power to the north (direction of road block) and to equalize this he directed the weapons platoon leader to attach one light machine gun to each of the 3d and 2d platoons.

Patrols were sent out to the south and northeast trying to locate trails that might be used to support tanks in order to bypass the road block, both patrols were fired on within seventy five yards of the perimeter and returned.

All officers were worried about the condition of the men, they were dead tired and it was getting more and more difficult to have them prepare adequate positions. Lt. Shepard ordered a twenty five per cent alert and directed that platoon leaders visit the men every hour until daylight checking on cover, firing positions and fields of fire.

Due to the large perimeter every man was to be on the outer perimeter and awakened one half hour prior to dawn. (25)

At 0230 all was quiet on both sides except for an occasional clink of a canteen or a "C" ration can being opened.

(25) Personal knowledge

Lt. Shepard was working over the SCR 300 radio in an attempt to contact Battalion, however the batteries were weak so the long antenna was used. This time he received them very faint. Capt. Hughes, S-3, an executive, was on the other set asking for our position. Lt. Shepard gave him the map coordinates and was told to remain in present position as the radio went dead.

Not a sound came from the enemy during the night and at 0505 the company went on a one hundred per cent alert, about 0530 dawn was just breaking when a rifle shot came from within the center of the perimeter, a few minutes later, more shots.

Lt. Shepard sent a patrol from the 3d platoon to investigate around the Chateau in the center of the perimeter.

MORNING ATTACK 10 JUNE

By now more shots were being fired and the volume was increasing. Lt. Shepard now sent a squad from the 3d platoon and as the volume of fire increased he informed Lt. Fisher, 3d platoon leader, to take his platoon and clean out the woods and for the weapons platoon and company headquarters to take over the 3d platoon area.

Within the perimeter came the sounds of heavy fire fight, small arms and machine gun fire was increasing, grenades and rocket launchers were being used.

A messenger from Lt. Fisher reported a company size group of Germans had been using the Chateau and were now trying to get out. Just then two men came dashing out of the nearest building waving a white handkerchief. They were in British battle dress. It is a miracle they were not killed by either of the opposing forces.

They were guarded to the company C. P. and identified themselves as British Commandos who had been captured on D-Day in the vicinity of Port-en-Bessin.

They stated that about one hundred and thirty Germans had moved in the afternoon before and had remained there during the night.

It was evident our inner perimeter consisted of another German company from the 517th Battalion 30th Mobile Brigade.

The 3d platoon now reported that more fire power was needed to dislodge the enemy from the heavily constructed stone chateau.

Lt. Shepard ordered that one squad from each platoon remain on the outer perimeter and the platoon leaders to personally lead their platoon in the attack toward the center of the perimeter.

Grenades were being tossed in the windows, rocket launchers and small arms fire poured steady volumes in all openings.

At this time the Germans started to scramble from all

exits, running in the direction of the roads. Large numbers were being killed by the rifleman of the attacking force and from those that remained on the outer perimeter.

The few men holding the perimeter defense were overrun and as the Germans ran into the road they were greeted by heavy machine gun fire from the tanks, the woods and roads were literally covered with dead.

The fight stopped as quickly as it had started. The German company commander and one soldier surrendered. Our prisoners now numbered just under one hundred, eighty German dead were counted in the company positions. (26)

The remainder of the day was spent improving positions, cleaning equipment and getting some much needed rest.

Rations were extremely low, the company was under the impression that the Battalion was going to continue the advance in our direction as we were ordered to hold fast.

Patrols were out and reports came back that a sizeable enemy force was still maintaining the road block at RJ. D. and that others were observed in and around Sandrine.

THE RETURN TO BATTALION POSITION

Nothing further happened during the day. For the night Lt. Shepard ordered a twenty five per cent alert until one half hour prior to daybreak and one hundred per cent thereafter.

(26) A-4, date line 10 June

At 0605 hours heavy firing broke out at the road block (R.J. D.) (See Map C)

Machine gun and tank cannon fire could be heard. Then again all was quiet, a few minutes later the rumbling of tanks then a large body of troops could be seen approaching down the road toward our position from the direction of the road block. Every one was alerted, the tank guns were laid on the column.

As the column drew nearer the point was challenged by the road anti-post. Loud shouts went up as the point identified themselves as part of the 2d Battalion, commanded by Lt. Col. Daniels.

Lt. Col. Daniels informed Lt. Shepard to remain on his position and he would be contacted by the 3d Battalion later in the day, then thanking the company for assisting him in securing his objective, the 2d Battalion moved on.

At about 0830 a patrol from the 3d Battalion reported to Lt. Shepard and informed him they were to guide the company to the Battalion. The company arrived at the Battalion positions at approximately 1100 11 June in vicinity of Agy and placed in Battalion reserve. (See Map C)

Religious services were held in the Battalion area. General Huebner, Division Commander, visited the company and talked with several of the men. He was quite proud

and congratulated the battalion for being the first unit to reach its intermediate beachhead objective.

From 6 June the advance of the battalion had placed them twelve miles inland. To men of I Company it was difficult and tiresome, however morale was good, the memory of the beach far behind.

The next phase was to secure the final beachhead objective, Caumont, and there would be no delay. The battalion was alerted to move at 2000 hours 11 June. (27)

To sum up the results of I Company's operations: Had the company during the period 9-11 June been engaged on an assigned mission requiring similar results, it could be said I Company had performed its job with outstanding success.

The company had delivered a death blow to two company sized enemy units totaling over two hundred killed and captured and several pieces of equipment destroyed during the action.

The company had nearly secured the entire 2d Battalion objective.

From the 3d Battalion point of view the company operation was a complete failure.

The battalion had taken its objective by the afternoon of the 9 June and the command had been able to get some much needed rest which was the main concern of the battalion commanders.

(27) A-4, date line 11 June 1944

The Battalion Commander had lost control due to his subordinates shortcoming and could have been disastrous had the battalion been engaged by enemy in equal strength.

ANALYSIS AND CRITICISM

1. SECURITY DURING MOVEMENT

Immediately upon moving out from the battalion I Company pulled in their flank security making them extremely vulnerable to enemy attack. At the time the principle tactics of the enemy was to delay and harass and had the enemy elected to harass the flanks, severe casualties would have been inflicted on I Company. Tanks would have been of little or no use. Their fire was masked by the road embankments and movement restricted forward and backward.

In all probability it would have been necessary to have abandoned the tanks in order to extract the foot elements from possible annihilation.

Sufficient security must be furnished on the march to avoid surprise. In the event the flank guards cannot keep pace new guards must be furnished at intervals with the old guards falling in at the rear of the column.

It is the responsibility of the column commander to see that the advanced guard is sufficient in strength to accomplish this mission. When they become weakened by attrition reinforcements must be made from the main body or the advanced guard be completely relieved by elements from the main body.

2. RECEIPT OF ORDERS

When orders are received they must be understood to the last detail. It became obvious later in the operation that none of the officers including the company commander knew where the battalion's positions were.

Before moving a unit, a commander must be thoroughly familiar with the missions of the higher and adjacent units, know in detail the mission of his own command, and in all cases inform his subordinates of all details to successfully accomplish the mission.

The proper dissemination through the chain of commands of orders will insure the success to the highest degree even though casualties are suffered to key officers and non-commissioned personnel.

It is believed that had the battalion's positions been known more aggressive action would have been taken by the company to overcome the enemy resistance resulting in contact with the battalion late 9 June instead of 11 June two days later.

Had the battalion been unable to accomplish its mission the deficiency would have been attributed to "I" Company in its failure to carry out the battalion order.

3. TANK INFANTRY TEAM

Mutual support and mutual security is not only desirable but necessary between tank and infantry elements.

One must protect the other against elements to which they are vulnerable. The greatest threat to infantry will not normally effect tanks and vice versa.

The coordination between tank and infantry must start in training. They must habitually operate together (same tank team with same infantry team.)

Faith, by knowing the other teams capabilities and mutual acquaintance down to each individual soldier within the teams, is the only solution.

4. SECURITY DURING DEFENSE

The company perimeter of the Chateau was lacking in defense measures. Patrols were sent out and when fired on timidly returned to the perimeter. When this information was made known to the company commander, steps should have been taken to outpost completely around the main defenses even though the perimeter would have been initially weakened by this action.

Everyone was aware of the vulnerability of the defense, an enemy attack could be expected from any direction.

Had the enemy elected to attack, outposts although out only fifty yards could have given adequate warning than have withdrawn back to prepared positions on the perimeter without weakening the defense.

5. ARTILLERY SUPPORT

It was a policy to plot defensive fires by map coordinates across and in depth of the zone of action, numbered consecutively from L of D to a depth beyond the objective.

These fires and numbers were known to all officers in the company, yet not one round of artillery fire was called for despite numerable excellent targets which appeared, fire could have been adjusted by any member of the company.

As an emergency existed radio silence should have been broken early on the first day and artillery fire brought down on enemy targets.

Artillery fire alone could have eliminated the enemy road block restricting the movement of the company.

As the 300 radio set was nearly useless due to the lack of batteries, tank radio should have been utilized for necessary communication.

LESSONS

1. When a company is separated from a larger force it is necessary to furnish its own security. This security is not only required to the front but is equally necessary to the flanks and in situations similar to I Company must be furnished to the rear as well.
 2. Orders must be thoroughly understood and disseminated down the chain of commands to assure successful accomplishment of the mission.
 3. To assure maximum coordination and mutual understanding the composition of the tank-infantry team should be habitually the same (same tank and crew - same infantry.)
 4. In the defense, security must be furnished to avoid complete surprise. If outposts are unable to go out the desired distance they should be out to the limit the situation will permit.
 5. When the situation permits, artillery support should be employed in order to bring your maximum supporting fires to bear against all suitable targets.
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